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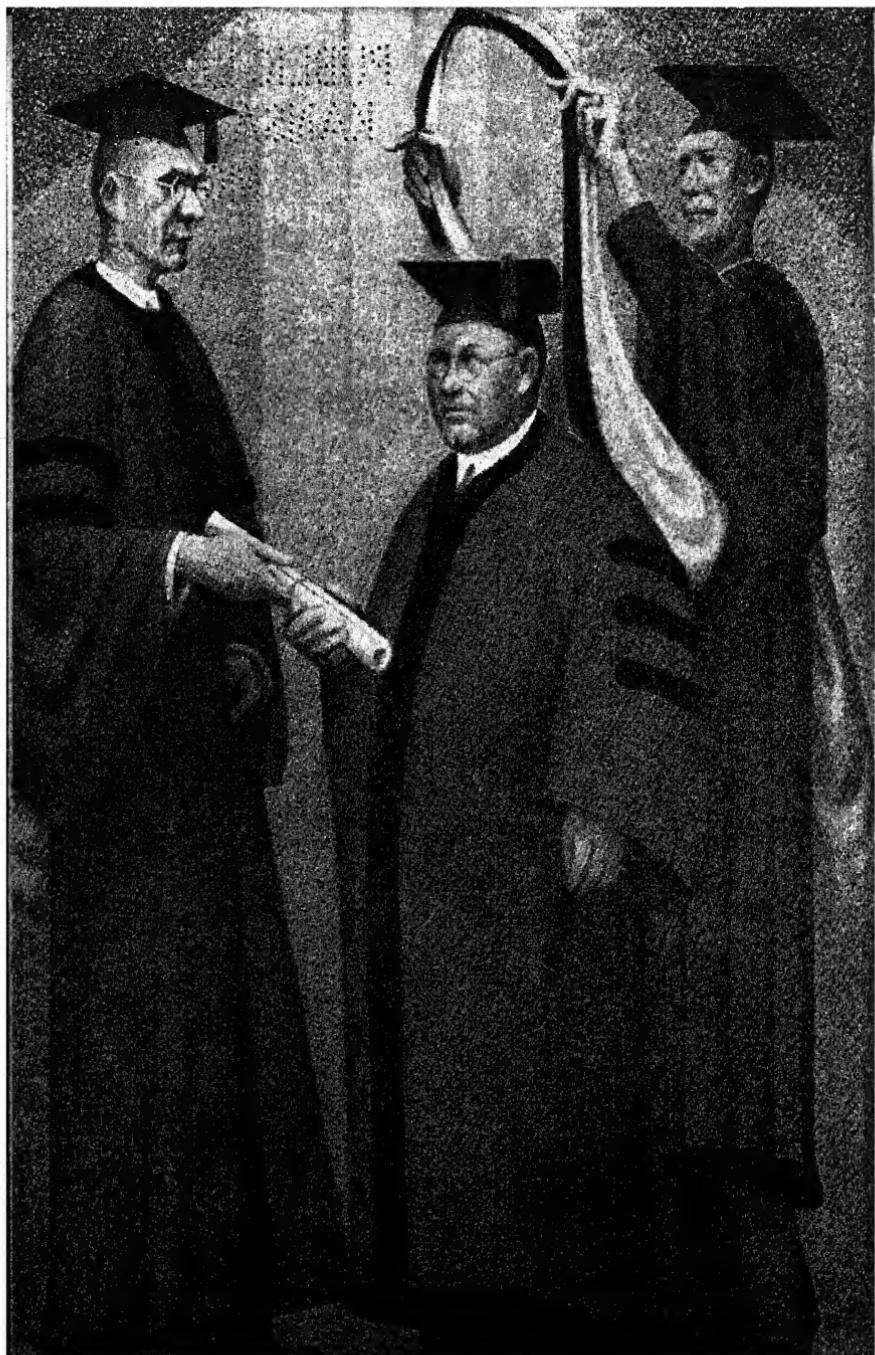
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HONORARY DEGREES



HONORARY DEGREES

A Survey of Their Use and Abuse

BY STEPHEN EDWARD EPLER

Frontispiece From a Lithograph by Grant Wood



American Council on Public Affairs

WASHINGTON, D. C.

TO MY WIFE

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The letters appearing in Chapters II and III, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the originals in the Columbiana Collection of the Library of Columbia University.

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CHAPTER I

American Honorifics

Man early discovered that one means of attaining and perpetuating desirable forms of behavior was the bestowing of honors. The Greeks had their laurel wreaths, the Romans their togas, the Indians their colored feathers. Vilfredo Pareto recognized the importance of such distinctions when he wrote: "The need that the individual feels for being well regarded by his group, for winning its approval, is a very powerful sentiment. On it human society may be said to rest."¹ Such institutionalized awards as titles, knighthoods, and emblems of valor, as well as economic and material rewards, have long been used to direct men's activities.

During the French Revolution the old honors and titles of nobility were swept away. The Republicans opposed formal marks of distinction, and they resisted Napoleon's efforts to institute the award of the "Arms of Honor." Napoleon replied to their protests: "You call them toys? . . . Well learn then that it is through such toys that men are led!"² In 1802 Napoleon succeeded in establishing the French Legion of Honor, and mem-

¹Pareto, Vilfredo, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. II, p. 690.

²Klein, Henri, "Orders and Decorations," *The Encyclopaedia Americana*, Vol. 20, p. 765.

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bership in the Legion continued in the Third Republic as recognition for outstanding service in war or in civil life.

In Russia in 1917, as in France in 1790, the revolutionary leaders abolished the honorifics of the old regime, but soon created awards of their own. The highest honor, "Hero of the Soviet Union," is usually reserved for the military. Second to that is the "Order of Lenin," which is occasionally conferred on workers; and somewhat lower on the scale is the "Order of the Red Banner of Toil," the usual award for workers who have rendered outstanding service.

Hereditary titles of nobility and orders of knighthood have for generations been the principal marks of distinction in England. Royal birthday and New Year honors are given for all types of achievement—and especially for scientific, military, political, and academic attainments.

In the United States the Federal Constitution forbids the granting of titles.³ Except for military honors and occasional Congressional medals, the government of the United States grants few awards. Thus the honorary degree is perhaps the most important honorific in the nation.

It is somewhat surprising that the awarding of honorary degrees has been so much taken for granted that it has been the subject of very little analysis or investigation. The present work is, therefore, a pioneer study, with the attendant limitations and deficiencies. It undertakes to examine the historical development and changes in practice and policy of selected institutions in awarding honorary degrees. Moreover, it endeavors to review analytically the social characteristics of the recipients (occupation, nationality, political and religious affiliations, age, and formal education), the relation of honorary degrees to earned degrees, academic and lay opinion toward honorary degrees, and present honorary degree practices and policies.

The study is based primarily upon a detailed analysis of the policies of seven leading American institutions of higher learning, an examination of original letters and documents relating to Columbia University's honorary degrees awarded in the period 1770-1874, a review of pertinent articles and pamphlets, a survey of contemporary practices, and a general poll of the opinions of business, farm, and labor leaders, as well as of journalists.

The seven institutions selected for detailed study are Harvard and

³Constitution of the United States, Article I, Section 9, paragraph 8; Section 10, paragraph 1.

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Columbia Universities, Smith College, and the Universities of North Carolina, Wisconsin, California, and Nebraska. The considerations which entered into the selection of these institutions were their age, geographical location, type of control, sex of students, and the availability of records regarding the awarding of degrees and biographical material concerning the recipients. The seven finally chosen represent those institutions which selected a higher proportion of well-known men for honor than most colleges. Harvard University, the oldest institution of higher learning in the United States, conferred the first honorary degrees. Columbia, a privately controlled institution with a long history, has a great many valuable and pertinent records bearing on the subject of this study. The University of North Carolina, a publicly controlled institution, is one of the oldest Southern universities. The University of Wisconsin is a state institution with a liberal background. The University of Nebraska is a Midwestern institution of recent development. The University of California is one of the newer institutions in the far West. Smith College was included principally because it is a woman's college of the first rank.

The study was largely confined to five periods, selected to give a fair historical cross section. The periods are: before 1787 (Harvard and Columbia are the only institutions of the seven studied which were then in existence); the 1830-39 decade, which is generally representative of the years between the Revolution and the Civil War; the 1870-79 decade, a period which saw the beginning of graduate schools and modern universities; and the 1907-16 and the 1919-28 decades, which afford a comparison of the years before and after the first World War.

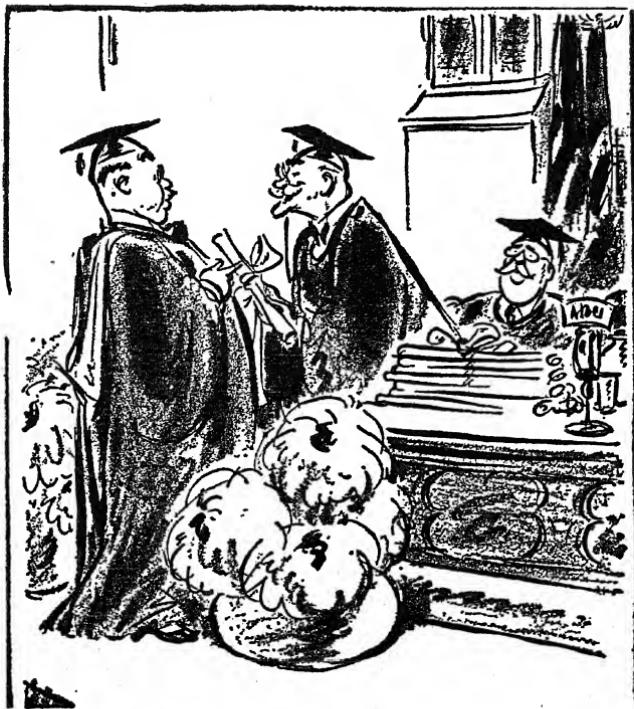
The sources for the names of those who received honorary degrees were, of course, the catalogues and alumni directories of the seven institutions. Information about the recipients was taken from the *Dictionary of American Biography*, for the earlier periods, and from *Who's Who in America*, for the years after 1900. For information about those not included in these volumes, the writer consulted miscellaneous sources such as state histories, records of universities, specialized biographical dictionaries, and newspaper files.

To determine current practices, policies, and academic opinion with respect to honorary degrees, a questionnaire was sent by the author to five hundred colleges and universities. Responses were received from more than half of the institutions. Three general aspects were covered in the questionnaire: the types of honorary degrees awarded and the social characteristics

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of recipients, the methods of selecting recipients and conferring degrees, and the opinions of the college president concerning the awards.

Since the importance of honorary degrees depends to a large extent upon the respect they command from the lay public, an effort was made to poll the attitudes of the leaders of agricultural, labor, and business groups through letters sent out by the author. The views of journalists were assembled through the assistance of a professional clipping service. Articles in professional publications from 1860 to the present were also studied. Miscellaneous factual material was obtained from the reports of the United States Office of Education covering the years since 1870.



"Confidentially, Tom you old walrus, we're going to send you the bill for our new gymnasium."

Washington (D. C.) Daily News, June 8, 1940. Reprinted by special permission.

CHAPTER II

Historical Origins

Honorary degrees in America have a long history. In 1663 the Assembly of the Colony of Rhode Island passed an act which gave John Cranston a license to practice medicine and to use the title "Doctor of phissicke and chirurgery."¹ If this can be interpreted as an honorary degree, then it was probably the earliest conferred in America.

Harvard has the distinction of being the first college in America to award honorary degrees. In 1692, some 50 years after its founding, Harvard College conferred the degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology on its own president, Increase Mather, and the degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology on the two tutors who constituted its faculty. There was then no Yale or other nearby institution to confer the honors. England was a long ocean voyage away and her honors went to men of the Church of England, not to Puritan ministers. So Harvard took the matter into its own hands. It has been argued² that, strictly speaking, the award to Mather was not an honorary degree according to European custom. The degree, however, was not conferred because of the completion of a course of study laid down in advance and cannot be classed as an earned degree. The purpose of the

¹Waite, Frederick C., "Medical Degrees Conferred in the American Colonies and in the United States in the Eighteenth Century," *Annals of Medical History*, New Series, Vol. 9, No. 4, p. 314.

²Morison, S. E., *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century*, Part II, p. 491.

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award was to raise the status of Harvard from a college to a university which could confer doctorates. Since "only a doctor could create a doctor" and "as Increase Mather had not been laureated doctor in England, it was necessary to make him one."³ It can be easily contended that since no doctor made this award to Mather it was not a valid degree of any kind.⁴

If Harvard was more than 50 years old before it granted an honorary degree, it was somewhat more generous in the subsequent 84 years. The total number of honorary awards, including master's and bachelor's as well as doctor's degrees, for the 140 years of Harvard's existence before the Revolution was 24 degrees conferred at 16 commencements. This does not include *ad eundem* degrees extended to graduates who made application for them. By a custom in American colleges during the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth centuries, those who had earned a degree from one college were upon application admitted to the same degree (*ad eundem gradum*) from another college. These degrees are often listed in the college directories along with the honorary degrees. They were available to any college graduate who made application and paid the stipulated fee. At Columbia in 1830, the degree fee was eight dollars and was retained by the president as part of his salary. Wesleyan University (Connecticut) reported giving M.A.'s *ad eundem* as late as 1915.⁵

The in-course master's degrees awarded before the Civil War were also semi-honorary. They were conferred on graduates, usually three years after graduation from the A.B. course and upon payment of a diploma fee. No further work or attendance was required. Harvard's M.A.'s of this period were characterized by a wag as follows: "All a Harvard man had to do for his Master's degree was to pay five dollars and stay out of jail."⁶

From 1636 to 1775, Harvard gave five honorary doctorates, 17 honorary master of arts degrees, and two bachelor of sacred theology degrees *honoris causa*.⁷ Of the five recipients of doctorates, all were Harvard graduates and Congregationalists, and four of the five were ordained ministers. Their average age of 60 years indicates that the selecting committee had considerable respect for age. Two of the clergy, Increase Mather and

³*Ibid.*, p. 492.

⁴It is classified officially as an honorary degree in *Harvard University Quinquennial Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates, 1636-1930*, p. 1147.

⁵*Alumni Record of Wesleyan University*, p. 902.

⁶Morison, S. E., *Three Centuries of Harvard*, p. 35.

⁷*Harvard University Quinquennial Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates, 1636-1930*, p. 1146 ff.

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Samuel Locke, were presidents of Harvard at the time they received the honorary S.T.D., the Rev. Nathaniel Appleton in 1771 received the second honorary doctorate (another S.T.D.) and the Rev. Samuel Mather was made a Doctor of Sacred Theology two years later, 81 years after his grandfather, Increase Mather, received the first award. Harvard's first Doctor of Laws degree, LL.D., was conferred in 1773 on John Winthrop, a Harvard professor who was one of the leading astronomers of his day.

Among those awarded honorary master's degrees by Harvard during this period was Benjamin Franklin, who received the award in 1753. He received the same degree earlier that year from Yale, and, three years later, from William and Mary College in Virginia. He obtained two honorary doctorates in England, the LL.D. from St. Andrews in 1759 and the D.C.L. from Oxford in 1762. Franklin comments on his Harvard M.A. in his autobiography:

The business of the post-office occasioned my taking a journey this year (1753) to New England, where the College of Cambridge, of their own motion, presented me with the degree of Master of Arts. Yale College, in Connecticut, had before made me a similar compliment. Thus, without studying in any college, I came to partake of their honours. They were conferred in consideration of my improvements and discoveries in the electric branch of natural philosophy.⁸

Princeton conferred its first honorary doctorates, two LL.D.'s, in 1769 on John Dickinson and Joseph Galloway, politicians⁹ of their time. Galloway was a Loyalist who fled to England after the beginning of the American Revolution, but Dickinson was a Patriot who was a member of the Stamp Act Congress and a Brigadier-General in the Pennsylvania Militia. He was also a member of the Constitutional Convention and the founder of Dickinson College. Both men were in their thirties when they became Doctors of Laws.

Yale's first honorary doctorate was a degree of Doctor of Medicine granted to Daniel Turner, at his request, in 1723. This degree made him "the first man to receive a medical diploma in North America. . . . The degree was intended as some return for his generosity, hence those of a humorous turn of mind are said to have interpreted the M.D. as signifying *Multum Donavit*."¹⁰ Turner's gift was said to be in the form of books with

⁸Smith, Albert H., Editor, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, p. 217.

⁹The term "politician" is not used in this study in any derogatory sense but merely as an occupational classification.

¹⁰Packard, Francis R., *The History of Medicine in the United States*, pp. 160-1. "Multum Donavit" may be translated "he gave much." Note that the Cranston degree previously discussed was earlier than this award.

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an estimated value of 16 pounds.¹¹ Yale's second doctorate and first LL.D. went to Richard Jackson in 1773.

HONORARY DEGREES AT HARVARD AND COLUMBIA

Before the Revolution, English universities conferred some honorary degrees upon Americans. With the coming of the war and the closing of this source, American colleges were quick to supply the awards. Only five honorary doctorates were given by Harvard between 1636 and 1775, but 20 were conferred during the next decade, 1776-86. Harvard supported the Revolution and honored several of its leaders. General Washington and General Gates each received a Doctor of Laws degree. The first foreigners to receive honorary doctorates from Harvard were Frenchmen who aided the Revolution. Lafayette, the "Boy General," Luzerne, the French Minister to the United States, and Dupas, the French Consul, received LL.D.'s.

Political feelings were intense at this time and there were sharp divisions between Patriots and Tories. Only one of Harvard's recipients, the Rev. Ebenezer Gay of Hingham (a very old man), S.T.D., known as the "Father of American Unitarianism," was suspected of being a Tory sympathizer. The Patriots whose political affiliations were ascertained were later Federalists.

Before the Revolution Harvard conferred only one honorary LL.D. and four S.T.D.'s. But during the decade 1776-86 the Doctor of Laws was the most popular honorary doctorate. Ten LL.D.'s were awarded but only five S.T.D.'s and five M.D.'s. The clergy received a smaller share of honors during the war. Three of the five honorary M.D.'s went to professors in the newly organized medical school. This may have been a way of advertising the new department, of increasing the prestige of its faculty, and of making it eligible to grant degrees to students. In contrast to the period before 1776 when every recipient of an honorary doctorate was a Harvard alumnus, in the decade following 1776, only 13 of the 20 recipients were Harvard men.

The average age of those who received honorary doctorates before 1776 was 60 years, but during the war decade the average was 50. The war brought young men to important positions. Washington was 44 and Lafayette 27 when they received their LL.D.'s from Harvard. The latter

¹¹Waite, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

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was the youngest individual ever to receive an LL.D. from Harvard. The three professors of Harvard's newly organized medical school who received honorary M.D.'s in 1786 were respectively 32, 33, and 36 years of age.

A survey of the occupations of those who were awarded honorary doctorates shows that college presidents, teachers, and clergymen were honored from the very first. The medical profession followed in the early part of the eighteenth century and later, in the Revolutionary period, political and military leaders were admitted to the group awarded honorary doctorates.

In contrast to Harvard, King's College, later Columbia, was pro-British and Loyalist-controlled before the American Revolution. Eight of the nine doctorates (two were wholly honorary and seven were *ad eundem*) conferred by King's College between 1767 and 1774 went to men who are included in Lorenzo Sabine's *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution*. So high was the feeling against the Loyalists in control that in 1775 King's College's Tory President, Myles Cooper, was driven from the campus and forced to take refuge on a British warship which carried him to England.

The British Colonial Governor, William Tryon, and John Ogilvie, a clergyman of the Church of England, both Loyalists, received the only two honorary doctorates (excluding *ad eundem* degrees) given by King's College. A parchment written by Governor Tryon on April 6, 1774, the day after he received his honorary LL.D. (the last granted by King's College) shows that he gave 10,000 acres of Vermont land to his new Alma Mater. The College, however, never received title to the land because of the Revolution.¹² The closeness of the granting of the degree and the bestowing of the land may not be without significance.

A medical school was started under President Cooper at King's College in 1767 and in 1768 the college conferred the M.D. degree *ad eundem* on the four physicians of the medical school faculty. The same method was used to give the president an LL.D. degree. The medical faculty took the lion's share of King's College doctorates although two clergymen were given D.D.'s *ad eundem*. Alumni of King's College did not receive any honorary doctorates, probably because they were so young and so few in number. In 1774, when King's College gave its last honorary degree, it had only 32 alumni of ten or more years' standing.

¹²Pine, John B., "William Tryon, A Forgotten Benefactor," *Columbia University Quarterly*, Vol. 10, pp. 148-153.

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One former student, however, did write to King's College requesting that he be granted a degree. John Rutgers Marshall, a would-be clergyman, found that a college degree was required before "holy orders" could be taken. His request for an honorary A.M., written in 1770, was the earliest correspondence relating to honorary degrees found in the Columbiana Collection of Columbia University:

To the honourable, Reverend, & worthy the Governours of King's College in New York, the petition of John R. Marshall humbly sheweth,

That your Petitioner was in the whole above four Years under the Tuition of your College, & inasmuch as besides other Juvenile failings he was guilty of a Great fault towards Mr. Harpur, humbly desires to make all the reasonable Satisfaction and Submission for the Same, that you shall think or Judge it is his duty to do.

Since he has been in this colony he has for a considerable time been applying himself to the Study of Divinity, and has read prayers and Sermons in the town of Woodbury, where there is Gathering a Considerable Church, and the people there have conceiv'd So kind an opinion of him, that they Earnestly desire he may go home, and take holy Orders for them.

And the Reverend, the Clergy here, are very willing to recommend him, as Appears by their Letter; but that it is their Rule not to Recommend any for orders, but such as have been graduated at Some College;—what therefore he most humbly petitions for, of your Gentlemen the Governours of King's College, is, that you will be so kindly favourable to him, as to Grant him an honorary degree of Master of Arts; and Your petitioner as in duty bound Shall ever pray &c.

A letter signed by Joseph Lamson, Ebenezer Dibblee and Jeremiah Leaming urged the trustees to grant Marshall a degree so he could take "holy orders." In the list of graduates of King's College, Marshall is listed as receiving an earned A.B. as of his original class, 1762, and an in-course A.M. in 1773. Evidently his "Great fault towards Mr. Harpur," who was a professor and the librarian, held up the conferring of the degree until 1770 when his letter of apology was received. (Mr. Harpur was the subject of many student pranks, some of which are alluded to in *The Black Book, or Book of Misdemeanors in King's College*.) Marshall was not given an honorary degree, but three years later was given the usual in-course A.M. which it was customary to confer upon an alumnus three years after receiving the A.B. degree.

After the beginning of the Revolution, Harvard's rate of bestowing honors increased rapidly but King's College soon closed its doors. No degrees of any kind were conferred between 1776 and 1788; in the latter year the college re-opened under new leadership with the patriotic name of Columbia.

HONORARY DEGREES

An honorary degree, particularly an honorary doctorate, ideally is considered an academic honor which recognizes distinguished service or creative work. How well did these colleges succeed in selecting persons who were distinguished leaders and who had made creative contributions to their fields? *The Dictionary of American Biography* (hereafter called *D.A.B.*) in deciding who would be included in its nearly 14,000 biographies, attempted an impartial selection and inclusion is probably the best criterion available for determining whether or not an individual is important; it does not, however, indicate what degree of importance an individual attained. Over 2,240 writers compiled the biographies. No living persons were included. In general, only those were included who had made some significant contribution to American life. While some notorious persons such as John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's assassin, and individuals from fields seldom, if ever, considered as suitable from which to select honorary degree recipients are included, most of the biographies concern persons outstanding in public life, scientific and scholarly work, and the other fields from which recipients of college honors were usually selected.

Seventeen (77%) of the 22 Americans who received honorary doctorates from Harvard before 1787 were considered significant enough to be included in the *D.A.B.* Columbia, then known as King's College, conferred only two honorary doctorates (not including *ad eundem* degrees) before the Revolution, and both recipients are found in the *D.A.B.* Princeton, which conferred more honorary doctorates before 1787 than either Columbia or Harvard, had the lowest per cent included in the *D.A.B.*, 12 out of 32 (38%). Five of the recipients, all of whom have biographies in the *D.A.B.*, were politicians and received LL.D.'s; of the remaining 27, all ministers who were given D.D.'s, only seven were considered important enough to be included.

In the case of three institutions—Columbia, Harvard, and Princeton—before 1787, the more honorary doctorates conferred, the lower was the proportion of recipients included in the *D.A.B.* If one assumes that this is a reliable measure of the importance of these recipients, then fewer selections resulted in a much higher proportion of significant men.

The colleges of the United States in the period 1787-1860 carried on in much the same way as they had during the Colonial Period. New institutions came into existence but the older colleges remained small and continued to be undergraduate institutions. No mammoth universities existed in America before the Civil War and the struggling denominational

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college with its 100 or so male students was the typical college. Columbia College fell below an enrollment of 100 students several times in the 1830's. Yale College was the nation's largest institution of higher learning, boasting an enrollment of about 400. Harvard University, our oldest college, has many more living graduates than dead ones. In 1930, this institution reported a total of 55,299 graduates¹³ of whom only 17,910 were reported as deceased. The small student body during the first 250 years accounts for this. Harvard, Columbia, and other leading and powerful universities in our time were small struggling colleges before 1860 and conferred few degrees.

During the first 86 years after Columbia's founding, 1754-1839 (including the King's College period) 134 honorary doctorates were conferred. By contrast, Columbia in 1929 gave 134 honorary degrees in one year. This was, however, the largest number ever given in a single year. Recently, eight or ten has been the usual number. Columbia in the 1830's managed to get along on a budget of less than \$25,000. The meagerness of this figure is more significant when it is compared with the 1940 expenditure of Columbia University;¹⁴ the latter would have carried the old Columbia College of 1839 over 400 years. The college students before 1860 were much younger than those of today. In 1837-38, six students of Columbia's small enrollment were "under the age of 14 years and the average age of the graduates was about 19.¹⁵ The age of the college students was evidently not much greater than that of high school students today.

THE M.D. AS AN HONORARY DEGREE

During the period prior to 1860, the M.D., even more than the A.B., was conferred as an honorary degree. In fact, Harvard and Yale granted honorary M.D.'s before conferring earned M.D.'s. Harvard's first honorary M.D. was conferred on Edward Augustus Holyoke in 1783, and the first in-course M.D.'s were granted in 1811. Harvard's medical school granted in-course Bachelor of Medicine degrees from 1788 to 1811. "In

¹³*Harvard University Quinquennial Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates, 1636-1930*, p. 1206.

¹⁴The expenditures of Columbia College for the year 1838-1839 were \$20,696.34. *Minutes of the Trustees of Columbia College*, Vol. IV, Part I, p. 2057. Treasurer's Report, Nov. 11, 1839. The total budget appropriations for 1939-1940 were \$11,292,700.67. *Report of the President of Columbia University for 1940*, p. 34.

¹⁵*Minutes of the Trustees of Columbia College, 1838*. Vol. IV, Part I, p. 2026.

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1811, the degree of Doctor of Medicine was granted to graduates of that year and to earlier graduates who had not been admitted to it.¹⁶

Harvard sought recognition and prestige for its new medical school in 1786 by conferring the M.D. *honoris causa* on three of the school's new professors, Aaron Dexter, John Warren, and Benjamin Waterhouse. At this institution in the 1790's the degree of Doctor of Medicine was the most frequently conferred honorary doctorate, surpassing in number both the LL.D. and S.T.D. No leading university today would confer four in-course Ph.D. degrees and, at the same commencement, grant six honorary Ph.D.'s, but this is essentially what Harvard did in 1811 when it graduated four students as in-course M.D.'s and called in six men to receive the degree *honoris causa*. Honorary M.D.'s reached their high point at Harvard in the two-year period 1824-25, when 14 were conferred. It gave very few honorary M.D.'s after 1830. However, its last honorary Doctor of Medicine degree was granted as recently as 1909 when an honorary M.D. was bestowed on its retiring President, Charles W. Eliot.

The most frequently conferred honorary doctorate at Yale, from 1820 to 1840, was the M.D. degree. In 1828, eight of the nine honorary doctorates granted by Yale were M.D.'s. Its first in-course Doctor of Medicine degrees were conferred in 1814, and two years later six honorary M.D.'s were granted along with the 18 earned ones. In 1818, Yale granted ten M.D.'s to students who had finished the regular course and gave nine honorary M.D.'s to others.¹⁷ Six honorary M.D.'s were awarded in 1825, three in 1835, seven in 1845, ten in 1855, and one in 1860. The practice of granting M.D.'s *honoris causa* at Yale ended after 1860.

Both Harvard and Columbia gave honorary M.D.'s to the faculty members of their young and struggling medical schools. The trustees probably felt that the professors on the staff without the degree needed the prestige, and the honorary degree system provided an easy method of acquiring this mark of scholarship. However, one of Columbia's medical faculty, Richard Bayley (Professor of Anatomy, 1792-1793; Professor of Surgery, 1793-1801), declared, in a letter of April 24, 1793, to Dean Bard of the Medical School that he could not accept such an easily obtained honor: "I understand that the Trustees of Columbia College have some intention of conferring on me the degree of Doctor of Medicine: having hitherto

¹⁶*Harvard University Quinquennial Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates, 1636-1930*, p. 851.

¹⁷*Officers and Graduates of Yale University, 1701-1904*, pp. 203, 307.

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studiously avoided receiving from any publick body the honor which the Trustees so obligingly propose to do me, I hope they will allow me to decline it in the present instance. . . ."

After the turn of the century New York State required physicians applying for a license to practice to have a college degree. Physician McNeven, during the turmoil caused by Napoleon in Europe, had lost his diploma. Professor John R. B. Rodgers and the medical faculty came to his assistance and secured for him an honorary degree which enabled him to practice. On February 22, 1805, Rodgers sent the following letter to Columbia's president:

I am directed by the faculty of Physic of Columbia College to transport to the Trustees the enclosed Resolve in favor of admitting William James McNeven Doctor of Medicine in the University of Vienna, *ad eundem*, in this College.

A Law in our State renders it necessary that a foreign Graduate of Medicine, should file a Copy of his Diploma in the Clerk's office, in order to be admitted to practice Physic in this City.—But, from certain unfortunate circumstances, Dr. McNeven had his diploma, with all his other papers, taken from him some years ago—these he has never been able to regain—and from the present convulsed state of Europe, he is prevented from having recourse to the University of Vienna for a copy of his Diploma. . . .

The faculty . . . beg leave further to say, that Dr. McNeven's ability and talents, as well as his amiable & conciliating manner will render him (in their opinion) an highly valuable acquisition to any Society or Body, which may admit him to their Friendship or Honor.

John Pintard in 1819 succeeded in securing an honorary M.D. from Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons for his son-in-law, Richard Davidson, who was a practicing physician in New Orleans. In the following letter of April 8, 1819, to his daughter, Eliza Noel Pintard Davidson, he explained how he approached Dr. David Hosack and Dr. John Wakefield Francis, both of whom were trustees as well as faculty members of the College. The letter stressed the professional advantages that the degree brought.

I have this day written a short line to the Doctor, accompanied with a Diploma which was handed me yest^r by Dr^r Hosack whereby he is admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine by the Regents & faculty of the University & College of Physicians of this State. This subject has been sometime in train, and I w^d not anticipate it before it was brought to a successful issue. As it is very difficult to obtain the honorary degree & the College has resolved to confer no more after the present year, I suggested the hint to Doctors Hosack & Francis, who nominated the Doctor & with persevering address obtained a privilege wh^t the Doctor knows how to appreciate. He can now sign M.D. after his name, wh^t always gives consequence to a

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physician. His name will be announced in our papers & can be transferred to the N. Orleans Gazette, as the distinction may be of service to him, by showing that he has been honoured here. I likewise put up a Book presented by Dr Hosack, and the Doctor I hope will write a suitable letter of thanks. . . . His diploma will arrive, unexpected, & raise his reputation at home when they find he is honoured abroad, for with the faculty, these honours are highly respected, and designed as they ought to be considered, marks of merit & distinction. The fees I have paid with cheerfulness & mention them not to enhance the favour, but to show what charges attend these honours as established by the College—Matriculation \$3, Degree \$30,—\$33. . . .¹⁸

Professor F. C. Waite, who has made careful studies of medical degrees, states that

The granting of honorary M.D. degrees was much restricted until about 1830 and then some medical schools became very generous. This had proceeded to a point where it was becoming almost a scandal in some schools because men would ask for a degree and offer to pay fifty or one hundred dollars for it.

When the American Medical Association was founded in 1846, one of the things that was done was to attempt to stop the excessive giving of honorary M.D. degrees. They succeeded in that the number given after that diminished. . . . I think it may be fairly said that the giving of honorary M.D. degrees by reputable institutions practically ended before the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁹

HONORARY DOCTORATES RECEIVED BY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

While the granting of honorary M.D.'s to physicians declined after 1860, the bestowing of honorary degrees on college presidents is still a thriving tradition. During the period 1787 to 1860, all the presidents of Harvard, Yale, Columbia,²⁰ and Princeton were the recipients of one or more honorary doctorates, most of which were granted by these four institutions. The 22 presidents serving these four institutions in this period had 47 honorary doctorates conferred upon them; of these 28 came from these four colleges. For example: Harvard gave honorary doctorates to six of its seven presidents. It bestowed three doctorates on Yale's presidents, and Yale, in turn, gave an equal number to Harvard's presidents. John T. Kirkland, later President of Harvard, was granted an S.T.D. by Princeton in 1802 and in 1810, when he became President, his institution conferred an LL.D. on President S. S. Smith of Princeton. Harvard also bestowed doctorates on two of Columbia's presidents although Columbia gave none

¹⁸Excerpt from *Letters from John Pintard*, Vol. I, pp. 178-179.

¹⁹F. C. Waite, letter to the writer, March 8, 1940.

²⁰One President, Charles W. Wharton, who served only a few months in 1801, is omitted.

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in return. Yale granted two honorary doctorates to men who served as presidents of Princeton, and Princeton conferred the same degrees on two Yale presidents. All four degrees were given within a span of five years.

Most other colleges that gave honorary doctorates to presidents of these four institutions were neighboring colleges. For example, Brown honored a Harvard president, and the University of Pennsylvania gave an LL.D. to President Carnahan of Princeton. However, five doctorates were conferred on this group by British universities.

It is apparent that there was a marked tendency for these four institutions—Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, and Yale—to honor their own and each other's presidents. Nearly three-fifths of the honorary degrees were granted to the presidents after they had taken office and over one-fourth were conferred the same year or the year following the inauguration. This is perhaps an indication that the honor, in part, went with the office.

HONORARY DEGREES TO PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES

Presidents of the United States comprise the only group which received more honorary degrees per capita than the college presidents discussed above. The 15 Presidents of the United States who served before 1860 averaged 2.4 honorary degrees each, while the mean of the college presidents was 2.0. James Buchanan, with six doctorates, had more honors than any of his predecessors, but was only just ahead of Washington and Jefferson who had five each.

It should be noted that the first seven Presidents from Washington through Jackson are considered by historians as much superior to the eight from Van Buren to Buchanan. The fact that the first seven received 22 honorary doctorates as compared with 14 for the latter group indicates some relationship between the importance of the men and the number of awards received.

The Presidents who were college graduates received twice as many doctorates per capita as those who were not. The nine Presidents with bachelor's degrees received 27 honorary doctorates while the six men without degrees received only nine. Five of these nine doctorates went to Washington. Harrison and Taylor, the only two who received no honorary degrees also had no in-course degrees. Van Buren had no earned degrees but received two honoraries. Millard Fillmore, another of the six without earned bachelor's degrees, accepted an LL.D. from Hobart College in 1850,

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but refused the degree of Doctor of Civil Law which Oxford University of England offered him while he was on a European tour. It is, of course, possible that honorary degrees were refused by other Presidents.

While college presidents received several honorary degrees from British universities, none of the occupants of the White House during this period accepted foreign degrees. Andrew Jackson, also one of the six Presidents without a college education, was given his only honorary degree by Harvard but not without opposition by some of its board of trustees, among whom was former President John Quincy Adams. He commented on this award in his diary:

June 18 [1833]. Called from my nursery and garden by a visit from Mr. Quincy, President of Harvard University. . . . He told me also that as President Jackson is about visiting Boston the Corporation of the colleges had thought it necessary to invite him to visit the college; that he [Mr. Quincy] should address him in a Latin discourse, and confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws; and he intimated that I should receive an invitation to be present at these ceremonies.

I said that the personal relations in which President Jackson had chosen to place himself with me were such that I could hold no intercourse of a friendly character with him. . . . And independent of that, as myself an affectionate child of our Alma Mater, I would not be present to witness her disgrace in conferring her highest literary honors upon a barbarian who could not write a sentence of grammar and could hardly spell his own name. Mr. Quincy said he was sensible how utterly unworthy of literary honors Jackson was, but the Corporation thought it was necessary to follow the precedent, and treat him precisely as Mr. Monroe, his predecessor, had been treated. As the people of the United States had seen fit to make him their President, the Corporation thought the honors which they conferred upon him were compliments due the station, by whomsoever it was occupied. Mr. Quincy said it was thought also that the omission to show the same respect to President Jackson which had been shown Mr. Monroe would be imputed to party spirit—which they were anxious to avoid. . . . I adhered to my determination to stay at home.²¹

Adams' comments indicate he felt that honorary degrees should be considered as academic and scholarly awards and that the awarding of a diploma to Jackson was a clear case of honoring the position rather than the man. One factor in Adams' opposition was, as he implied, the bitter political differences between himself and Jackson. There is an unverified story to the effect that Jackson astonished the intellectuals by responding to the Latin discourse with the Latin motto "*E pluribus unum*" (one from many) which with the secession sentiment of the time was very meaningful. This award may have affected all the New England colleges as none of these

²¹*The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845*, p. 493 ff. (Allan Nevins, Editor.)

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institutions honored another President until 1853, when Bowdoin granted an LL.D. to Franklin Pierce, one of its own graduates. Harvard, which had honored six of the first seven Presidents, never bestowed an LL.D. on another until 1873 when Ulysses S. Grant's military achievements combined with the Presidency evoked another Doctor of Laws degree.

The conservatives seem to have been slightly more popular on commencement platforms than the liberals. Jackson's one degree and Buchanan's six are extreme examples of this preference. Jefferson received his five LL.D.'s in the years 1782 to 1791 before his bitter political struggle with the Federalists. It is doubtful if Harvard, Yale, or Brown, which honored him in the 1780's, would have done so after he became President.

In general, these Presidents were most frequently honored by colleges in their home area. Seven of the eight doctorates given to the three New England Presidents—John Adams, John Quincy Adams, and Franklin Pierce—were bestowed by admiring New England institutions. However, this section, more than the Middle or Southern sections, gave degrees to the Presidents who were natives of other states. Of 17 degrees given by New England colleges, ten went to those outside their borders. Four of the six doctorates conferred by Southern colleges (Maryland is included as a Southern State in this tabulation) went to Southern Presidents. James Knox Polk, a native of North Carolina, received his only LL.D. from his Alma Mater, the University of North Carolina. James Madison of Virginia was given LL.D.'s by William and Mary and nearby Princeton where he had earned his bachelor's degree. Eight of the 13 honorary degrees given by Middle Atlantic states went to Presidents born within their borders. Martin Van Buren of New York was the recipient of two doctorates, one from Rutgers, New Jersey, and the other from Union College, New York. Three of Buchanan's six doctorates came from his native state, Pennsylvania, and two more from nearby New Jersey.

To what extent were these awards given to honor the position of President rather than the individual? The fact that 23 of the 36 awards were made before the incumbent took his high office indicates that this was not the case with the majority. However, Monroe was given all three of his honors after taking office, and Jackson, Polk, and Fillmore each received the only degree given them after they were inaugurated. Of those degrees given to Presidents after they had attained this position, one half were conferred in the same year that the recipient was inaugurated.

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AWARDS TO OTHER GROUPS

The frequency with which honorary doctorates were conferred in the 1830's by Harvard and Columbia was several times greater than that in the Colonial Period. Harvard, which gave only 25 such honors from 1636 to 1787, granted 42 in the comparatively short period from 1830 to 1839. Columbia, which as King's College granted only two honorary doctorates (*excluding ad eundem* degrees), conferred 46 doctorates in the 1830's.

The University of North Carolina was the second oldest state university chartered in the United States (1789) and the first to grant degrees. The University opened in January, 1795, with a faculty of one and no students. The first student arrived the following month, but before the term was over, 41 students had enrolled. The first in-course degrees were granted in 1798. In 1830, the enrollment was still small, the number of graduates for that year totalling 14.²² It conferred only 11 honorary doctorates in the 1830's. Over 80% of these degrees (nine of the 11) were Doctors of Divinity, which was a larger share than that given by Columbia (74% D.D.'s) or Harvard (43% S.T.D.'s). However, for both Harvard and Columbia, the 1830's saw a substantial increase over the percentage of D.D.'s and S.T.D.'s granted in the Colonial Period.

The distinction between in-course degrees (earned by following a prescribed course of study under faculty direction with residence work and regular attendance at classes) and honorary degrees was very loose in this period. In 1831, Harvard conferred an honorary bachelor of arts degree on Ivers James Austin and Columbia gave the same degree *honoris causa* to Manuel Fetter in 1835. Even as late as 1864, Princeton granted five honorary A.B.'s in one year.²³ Yale granted A.B.'s *ad eundem* as late as 1900.²⁴ Several documents in the Columbian Collection indicate that honorary A.B.'s and A.M.'s were sometimes used as substitutes for in-course degrees where the candidate had completed the equivalent of the course leading to the A.B., but had not been able to meet all the formal requirements. William C. Heyward, for example, left Columbia College when a junior to attend West Point and was given an honorary A.B. by Columbia in 1830 at the request of his father:

I have also the honour of transmitting a letter addressed to me by William Heyward, Esqr. requesting that the same degree [A.B.] be conferred upon his son Wil-

²²Battle, Kemp F., *History of the University of North Carolina*, Vol. I, p. 793.

²³*General Catalogue of Princeton University, 1746-1906*, p. 425.

²⁴*Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates of Yale University, 1701-1904*, p. 323.

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liam C. Heyward, who received an honourable dismission from this college whilst a member of the Junior Class, with the view of entering the Military Academy at West Point, where he has since graduated. It will be seen from the minutes that upon communicating this application to the Board of the College, they unanimously agreed in recommending that the honorary degree of Bachelor of Arts be conferred on Mr. Heyward as requested by his father.²⁵

Edward Cooper was given an honorary A.M. in 1845 after he had mastered, with the help of his close friend, Abram S. Hewitt (later Mayor of New York City), the required Latin and Greek. Hewitt had previously written President Moore stating that Cooper had studied "classical studies for two years" under his direction and was worthy of a degree. Cooper's letter of September 16, 1845, to Columbia's board of trustees shows clearly that the honorary degree was in his case essentially an earned diploma.

In 1842 I received from your honourable Board the usual certificate which at that time was conferred upon the successful completion of the Literary and Scientific Course. Feeling a desire to obtain an acquaintance with the Ancient Authors and to receive the full honors of the College, I have during the previous year pursued the study of the classics under a competent instructor, with the intention of presenting myself at the concluding examination. Finding however that the course of reading was too extensive to enable me to complete it to my own satisfaction I applied to the President and Prof. Anthon for advice. They recommended me to place myself under the charge of Mr. Abram S. Hewitt, a gentleman well known to your honorable body, and the President stated that he did not doubt that the board would cheerfully confer a honorary degree upon the satisfactory completion of the College Course. . . .

Having therefore completed the full undergraduate course under the direction and with the approval of President Moore and Prof. Anthon without having confined myself to the studies therein prescribed to the exclusion of a proper attention to works of general literature. I respectfully venture to submit myself to your honorable body as a candidate for the honorary degree of Master of Arts, trusting that the efforts I made while a student and have since continued to render myself worthy of a degree from Columbia College with the rest of my class will not be without their proper weight before your Honorable Board.

These cases illustrate the loose distinction between honorary and earned degrees. Cooper mastered the Latin and Greek required for the bachelor of arts degree but because he did this outside the college walls, he was not eligible for the A.B. degree. Thus, the honorary A.M. was a convenient method of rewarding a deserving student without weakening the A.B. requirements.

The median age of recipients in the 1830 decade at Harvard, Columbia, and the University of North Carolina was the lowest of all the periods

²⁵*Minutes of the Trustees of Columbia College, Vol. III, part 2, p. 316.*

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studied.²⁶ The large number of honorary doctorates given to young ministers accounts, in part, for this. The median age of those who were given Harvard's honors was 49; Columbia, 38; and North Carolina, 42 years. The median age of the recipients at Harvard was forty-seven years for the period 1776-1787, but for the entire period before 1787, it was fifty-three years.

Harvard's youngest recipient in this period was Thomas Des Brisay, age 31, one of two physicians who were given honorary M.D.'s. Columbia honored one man who was also thirty-one years of age, Thomas W. Coit, President of Transylvania University in Kentucky.

DEGREES TO CLERGYMEN

The University of North Carolina was not in existence during the Colonial Period, but throughout the years from its founding to 1860, this state institution was greatly influenced by the religious spirit of the times. Some 36 Doctor of Divinity degrees were conferred before 1860 as compared with only 21 degrees of Doctor of Laws. Furthermore, many of the 41 honorary A.M.'s granted went to the clergy.²⁷ It was, in some ways, more of a denominational college than either Columbia or Harvard. There was, for example, a requirement that students should attend church on Sunday. Sixty-four per cent of the University's honorary doctorates in the 1830's went to pastors, as against 54% for Columbia and 31% for Harvard. The Episcopalians, within the limits of the meager evidence, seem to have received the greatest share. In the 1830-39 period, of the eight recipients of North Carolina's honorary doctorates whose church affiliation was found, five (including two bishops) were members of this body. The other three were Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and Baptist, respectively.

In the 1830-39 decade more than 30% of the recipients of honorary degrees at Harvard were active clergymen; several college presidents and professors were also ordained ministers. Even though Harvard conferred a larger percentage of honorary degrees on clergymen in the 1830's than in the other periods studied before and after this time, it gave a much smaller percentage to ministers than did Columbia or the University of North Carolina. The Unitarian ministers who represented the dominant

²⁶These periods are: Before 1787, 1830-1839, 1870-1879, 1907-1916, and 1919-1928.

²⁷Honorary Bachelor of Arts degrees were also conferred. *Alumni History of the University of North Carolina, 1795-1924.*

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religious group at Harvard, received nine of the 13 honorary doctorates²⁸ given to the clergy. The Congregationalists, who had been the controlling religious group in the period before 1787, had only two of their preachers honored. The one Episcopalian clergyman given an S.T.D. was Bishop Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright, a former instructor at his Alma Mater. All but two of these thirteen clergymen were Harvard graduates.

The profuseness with which awards were made to the clergy in the pre-Civil War era prompted the editor of the *New York Chronicle*, a Baptist weekly, to print the following:

There is a convenience in giving the title of *Doctor* to a practitioner of medicine. . . . It is in no sense an ostentation. . . .

The title indicated by LL.D. is of comparatively questionable value. . . .

The D.D. is still more questionable in its propriety and usefulness. It is an assumption of wordly honor and distinction by certain members who, as a class make a point of disparaging worldly honor and distinction. It is equally their profession and their duty to teach mankind the hollowness of vain-glorious titles; and yet if the real opinions of clergymen about titles are to be estimated by their acquisition of titles, one of the most prominent objects of their lives must be the gaining by any means, and seemingly from any institution, the dearly-coveted "Doctor of Divinity."

. . . The designation "Reverend" has long been conceded to the clergy; that answers the purposes of distinction and that ought to satisfy them.²⁹

A writer in a popular magazine in 1851 commented: "The degrees of Doctor of Divinity and Laws, from too great freedom in their use, have got to be but an inferior quality of literary gingerbread, passed around indiscriminately by our colleges, *pro bono publico*."³⁰

Columbia, which was under the influence of the Episcopal Church,³¹ reflected this fact by giving over two-thirds of its honorary doctorates in the period to members of this denomination, most of them bishops and ministers. The religious affiliation was found for 37 of the 46 recipients: 25 (67.6%) were Episcopalians; four, Dutch Reformed; three, Presbyterian; two, Lutheran; one, Congregationalist; one, Baptist; and one,

²⁸The affiliation of one of the 13 was not found. The religious affiliation of all recipients, including occupations other than clergy, was found for 19 of the 42 recipients. Of the 19, 14 were Unitarian, two were Congregationalists, two were Episcopalians, and one was a Presbyterian.

²⁹*New York Chronicle*, Vol. VIII, No. 185, Nov. 21, 1857. (Credit given to *Evening Post*.)

³⁰Fardelism, Timon, "Essay on the Degrees and Titles Conferred on Men by Our Colleges," *Holden's Dollar Magazine*, Vol. VIII, p. 200, Nov. 1851.

³¹The Protestant Episcopal or "Episcopalian" Church succeeded the Church of England after the Revolution.

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Catholic. Of the 25 clergymen honored (54% of all recipients) 17 were Episcopalians, including six bishops.

Some of the methods used to increase the number of doctors of divinity are revealed in letters written before 1860, now in the Columbiana Collection. In fact, most of the correspondence relating to honorary degrees is about degrees for clergymen. This would be expected at a college controlled in a large measure by the clergy and one which gave most of its honors to Divines. The friends of ministers were often very persistent and thorough in their efforts to gain D.D.'s for their pastors, and undoubtedly they were encouraged at times in their efforts by the would-be recipients themselves.

These documents reveal that personal relationship with Columbia College and its governing body was an important factor in the choice of recipients. A trustee's recommendation carried great weight, and a close friend of a trustee could secure a degree for a candidate much more easily than an individual without that connection. If the candidate were an alumnus, an Episcopalian, or a New Yorker, his chances of success were increased.

The successful campaign of Mr. Hoyt in seeking a D.D. for his friend, the Rev. Ambrose S. Todd of Stamford, Connecticut, is an example of extreme persistence in enlisting the support of influential men. Hoyt wrote to at least three individuals, including the Episcopal Bishop of Connecticut, asking them to write testimonials in Todd's behalf. The following letter was sent to the Rev. Haight, a Columbia trustee, by Harry Croswell on August 30, 1844:

I have rec'd. a letter from Mr. Hoyt of New York saying that "a number of the clerical and lay friends of the Rev. Mr. Todd of Stamford, are exceedingly anxious that he should have conferred upon him the degree of D.D. at the approaching commencement of Columbia College"—and requesting me to send to you a letter of testimonial, and that you may present the subject to the Board of Trustees, and I know not what testimonials are required in such a case: But as Mr. Hoyt proposed to make the same request to Dr. Mead and Bp. Brownell, I presume their will be no lack of proper documents.—It is sufficient for me to say that I am a personal friend of Mr. Todd, and I consider him among the most faithful and exemplary clergymen—and that I had such confidence in his fitness for a doctor's degree, that I presented his name for that purpose to the Trustees of Washington College at the late Commencement,—other applications having been rejected on that occasion, I subsequently withdrew the name of Mr. Todd. Should Columbia College see fit to do what we have left undone, I should feel gratified.

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Bishop Brownell sent a short note—he may have felt that the influence of his position would compensate for the lack of words—to the Rev. Haight in behalf of Todd:

I learn that an application will be made to the Trustees of Columbia College to confer the Degree of Doctor of Divinity on the Revd. Mr. Todd of Stamford, and I beg leave to add my testimonial to his deserts. Mr. Todd is a well-learned Clergyman, and a sound theologian. The estimation in which he is held by his Brethren in this Diocese, is evinced by his appointment as a delegate to the next General Convention as colleague with Drs. Croswell, Jarvis and Mead.

The Rev. Haight also received the following letter from Dr. William Cooper Mead:

I rec'd. a letter recently from Mr. D. N. Hoyt of N. York in which he says "I am requested by our friend Rev. B. L. Haight (who is now absent from home) to write you for testimonials suitable to obtain the degree of D.D. for the Rev. Mr. Todd of Stamford at the approaching Commencement of Columbia College."

The great worth of brother Todd,—his sound & enlarged views as a theologian, and his consistent character as a Presbyter of the Catholic Church are well known to all who are intimately acquainted with him.—If these characteristics, together with the fact, (important in this age of instability,) that he has for more than 20 years ministered faithfully & successfully at one altar, be any claim to distinction, I think he has a good title to the honour now sought for him. His general standing in this Diocese is equal to the most respectable among us; & it would give me, & many of his friends sincere pleasure should he receive the Doctorate from Col. College. I am confident that, if the above claims be valid, your institution would not err while conferring its honours on a gentleman of his worth. I have no doubt that if, at the late Commencement of Washington College, our Board had conferred the degree of D.D. on any clergymen, Mr. Todd would have been among the number;—at least I am assured that Bishop Brownell, & Dr. Croswell, as well as myself would have voted for it. It has been my intention to ask for the degree for him from another College where I might have some influence in obtaining it; & should your effort fail, I have this in reserve.

Rev. Todd was given a D.D. The trustees who voted it were undoubtedly impressed by Hoyt's persistence and the quantity of the testimonials in his behalf.

A very flattering testimonial by former Trustee J. W. Wainwright succeeded in bringing a D.D. to his candidate, the Rev. Isaac Boyle. The scholarship of the candidate is stressed in this letter much more than was usually the case. Biographers, however, did not seem to agree with Wainwright's evaluation; Boyle was not included in the standard biographical dictionaries. Wainwright wrote the following letter to Columbia's president on August 1, 1838:

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In conformity with your suggestion when I had the pleasure of seeing you last I beg have briefly to state what seem to me the Rev. Isaac Boyle's qualifications for the honorary title of Dr. in Divinity. He was educated at Harvard. . . . He was somewhat advanced in life when he entered college and must now be over fifty years of age. . . . Indeed it is in my opinion that in Hebrew, Greek, & Latin as well as in the modern languages in History, Civil and Ecclesiastical, in moral and intellectual philosophy, in systematic divinity and in the belles lettres, he is the most accomplished clergyman of the Episcopal Church in the New England States with perhaps one exception. My friend, the Rev. Wm. Croswell of Boston writing to me upon this subject says "you know he deserves it (i.e., the degree of D.D.) that he is one of the few of our clergy who can pass an examination for it, if indeed he could find those capable of examining him."

Age rather than youth was an asset in obtaining an honorary degree. Some honors were given to young men in spite of their age, but to older men because of it. A letter written on May 7, 1828, by the friends of the Rev. William Hendel, a Columbia graduate of the class of 1791, made an appeal to Columbia to honor old age and a worthy alumnus. The message was signed by five men including a Governor of Pennsylvania and a physician who was a graduate and fellow of Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons.

We beg you to pardon the freedom which we assume in offering to your notice the Reverend William Hendel, of Womelsdorff, in this state, for whom we are desirous of obtaining the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. Mr. Hendel was a graduate of your College upwards, we think, of thirty-five years ago, and has ever since been in the ministry of the German Reformed Church, holding, during the whole of that period, a highly respectable rank among his reverend brethren. He is now advanced in years; still retaining, however, the full use of his faculties, both of body and mind; and devoting himself to the discharge of his pastoral duties.

Mr. Hendel having graduated at Columbia College, it would, unquestionably, afford him a more lively pleasure to receive the honour, which we desire for him, from your kindness than to be indebted for it to any other Institution. If it should, therefore, be agreeable to your inclinations and duties, your compliance with our wishes would afford us very high gratification.

The correspondence in the Columbiana Collection reveals only part of the various campaigns carried on. Oral communications and many personal letters to trustees and friends which were not filed with the "Committee of Honours" doubtless represented even more vigorous efforts. There are fewer letters for local recipients, which seems to indicate that suggestions for many of these were made orally.

The successful campaign for a D.D. for Rev. John W. McCullough, Rector of the Trinity Episcopal Church of Wilmington, Delaware, included

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letters of testimony from at least five men. Distance made it necessary to convey their testimonials in the form of letters. The fact that four of the documents were dated August 30th and the fifth August 31st, 1845, indicates that they were not all spontaneous. From New Castle, Delaware, came the following communication under the signature of William J. Read:

I have had the pleasure, and may I truly say, the privilege of an intimate acquaintance with the Reverend John W. McCullough, for several years. It would be beside my present purpose to say a word in reference to his eminent qualities as a Christian minister and a gentleman, to which all who know him cannot but bear the strongest testimony. I have served with him in many conventions of the Church in this State and on the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Delaware since 1839, and have had proof upon proof of his vigor, astuteness and comprehensiveness of intellect and extensive theological knowledge—which have been evidenced to the public by his various published works and particularly by his recent essay on the “Intermediate State”—He has fully entitled himself to the honors of literature and should Providence prolong his valuable life, I am confident, will give himself still stronger claims to the gratitude and applause of his fellow men by continued use of his eminent endowments for their benefit.³²

While the faculty members at Columbia had less influence in selecting men for honorary degrees than did the trustees—unlike the University of North Carolina where the faculty actually made the selection—the suggestions of its members were sometimes accepted. The following short note from President Duer (dated August 2, 1830) to a member of the board of trustees indicates the influence of Columbia’s Professor of Greek, Charles Anthon.

At the request of Professor Anthon I beg leave to suggest the name of the Reverend *Frederick C. Schaeffer* to the Standing Committee for the honorary degree of D.D. I am not personally acquainted with Mr. Schaeffer but Professor Anthon assures me he is well worthy of the distinction and is known to several of the trustees.

The degree was granted. The fact that the recipient was an alumnus and lived in New York was in his favor.

On August 7, 1830, Dr. Schaeffer wrote the following letter to President Duer thanking him for the honor and asking for a scholarship for his son, which was granted:

With true regard and unfeigned gratitude I acknowledge the honor which was conferred by you at the recent commencement of Columbia College.

The value of the unmerited gift is enhanced by the circumstances, that it was

³²Letters from John M. Clayton, George B. Rodney, James Booth and C. A. Spooner, all of Delaware, August, 1845, recommending McCullough are also in the Columbian Collection.

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received under your auspices, and from a college which I have ever considered as the most able and unassuming of our literary institutions. Her interests are the object of my constant solicitude. The increase of her prosperity and usefulness, must augment the happiness of all who delight in her high and noble purposes.

Be pleased to convey to the Trustees of Columbia College my cordial thanks for their condescending testimonial.

But while I approach you with the expression of gratitude for benefits received, I come with an application for the extension of your favor. I refer you to the official communication accompanying this note, and signed by a great proportion of the "authorized representatives" of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in this city.

Should the Trustees see fit to grant this petition, I pray that my fond expectations may be realized; that the gentlemen who afforded me the pleasing opportunity of transmitting such a paper, may never have occasion to regret their choice; and that the College whose fostering care is respectfully solicited, may take pleasure in calling *my son her son*. . . . [Words in italics in this and following letters were underlined in original.]

Two years of persistent effort were required to secure D.D.'s for Robert McCartee and Eli Baldwin. Their friends had successfully won over Bishop Hobart (Columbia Trustee, 1801-1830) but, as a result of his death, they continued their efforts through Bishop Onderdonk, his successor. In a letter of May 17, 1831, to the latter, Cornelius D. Westbrook explained:

Having some time previous to the last commencement of Columbia College united with my friend Dr. Rowan in an application to Rev. Dr. Spring to obtain his influence for procuring the honorary degree of D.D. for our Friends the Rev. Eli Baldwin of the Reformed Dutch Church and the Rev. Robert McCartee of the Presbyterian Church, and both Pastors of Churches in this City, I addressed a note to my friend Bishop Hobart on the same subject.—While on the stage at the last commencement of the College, the Bishop came up to me and told that having been from home for some weeks, he had not received my note 'till too late to attend to its request, but that it should be attended to at the next commencement. I make the . . . statement at the request of Dr. Rowan and if my name has any weight in the matter, I join my friend Dr. Rowan, and such others as may lend their names in the renewal of the application to you personally.

Bishop Onderdonk sent Westbrook and Rowan's letters on with a note to William Johnson, treasurer of the board of trustees. In the same communication, dated June 8, 1831, Onderdonk's reasons for asking a degree for another individual, Bishop Levi S. Ives, stress the importance of honoring a position, that of Bishop, and an institution, the Episcopal Church:

I take the liberty of enclosing the applications of which I spoke to you some time since, for two honorary degrees of D.D. from our college at the next commencement; and will only add that I have known Wm. McCartee since we were in college together, and believe that he sustains a high rank in his profession. I am happy,

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therefore, as wishing to be considered as writing in the application in his behalf. Of Wm. Baldwin I know nothing more than that he sustains the reputation of a highly respectable clergyman.

The distinguished testimony lately borne to the talents and merits of our well known and respected friend, the Rev. Levi S. Ives, Bishop-elect of the Protestant Episcopal Church in North Carolina, induces me to ask the favour of your soliciting for him also the recommendation of the standing committee for the degree of D.D. Columbia College has, for many years past, conferred that honour on all Bishops and Bishops-elect of our Church, who had not previously received it—a precedent which, I hope it will not be unwilling to follow up as a due honour to the church to which it owes its existence. . . .

Baldwin, McCartee, and Ives were granted D.D.'s in 1831. It should be noted that Ives had studied theology under Bishop Hobart and had married the Bishop's daughter. In 1852 he left the Episcopal Church and became a Catholic.

Columbia College seemed to take special interest in conferring D.D.'s on the Bishops of the Episcopal Church. Bishop Onderdonk wrote President Duer in 1840 asking that a D.D. be conferred on Stephen Elliott, Bishop-elect of Georgia, on the ground that it was a Columbia tradition to honor bishops. Bishop Elliott received the degree.

Likewise, Bishop Southgate, Missionary to the Turkish Dominion, on the recommendations of an alumnus and trustees, was granted the D.D. However, he did not receive the LL.D. with it, as Trustee William H. Harrison recommended, even though the latter pointed out that other institutions were following this practice. On August 26, 1845, Harrison sent the following note to the secretary of Columbia's board of trustees:

I will be necessarily absent from the meeting of the Trustees on Monday. Will you nominate (in my behalf if not on your own responsibility) the *Rt. Revd. Horatio Southgate, Missionary Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church at Constantinople* to the Hon. degrees of D.D. and LL.D. [sic] The former will, I presume, be a matter of course. His right to the other is evidenced (as I am given to understand by very good authority) in the Statesmanship displayed in the correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury and in his other papers. Many of our Bishops have both degrees and Dr. Hawks, one of our D.D.'s has just been made an LL.D. in North Carolina. Yale gives the LL.D. to our Presbyterian brethren.

The letters in behalf of clergymen who failed to receive honors often reveal the nature of the honorary degree system more clearly than the successful applications. Simon Greenleaf wanted a D.D. for his son-in-law. He wrote to William Kent, who was not a trustee nor even an alumnus of Columbia, but he failed to enlist his support. Kent sent the letter on to

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Trustee Jones with a note saying he did not personally know the Rev. Fuller, Greenleaf's son-in-law. (Fuller was not an alumnus of Columbia.) John S. Stone, who had little or no personal connection with the institution, also wrote to Jones in Fuller's behalf. Evidently the Columbia trustees almost extended an A.M. to Fuller. In the trustees' original minutes, his name with a line drawn through it is among those given honorary Master's degrees in 1841. The following letter of September 11, 1841, was sent by Greenleaf to Kent:

I am going to make a very unceremonious request, which as it may affect the interests of the Church we both love, I hope will carry its own apology. It is neither more nor less than that the name of the Rev. Samuel Fuller Jr. of Andover in this state may be favorably presented to the proper authorities of Columbia College in your city, as a candidate for the degree of Dr. of Divinity, at the approaching commencement—

He is a graduate of Union College—is a man of vigorous mind, . . . and is highly respected in the Diocese—His position in Andover so near that powerful institution keeps him constantly in armor, and he is much resorted to by the Theological Students there, especially in private, for light on the subject of Episcopacy—In this view I think it of importance to the interests of the Church to give him her testimony to his worth and talents, by the honor of this degree; . . . Perhaps his relation to me, as the husband of my daughter, may render me not quite impartial as a judge but he was a classmate with Dr. Stone in the Seminary, and from him you can learn how far my view is correct. . . .

William Samuel Johnson, former president of Columbia, former United States Senator, and son of Columbia's first president, in his letter of November 10, 1809, to President Moore made an unsuccessful plea for a D.D. for his hard-working pastor. Johnson argued that since the clergy received few secular honors it was the duty of the colleges to see that they received academic awards.

I have been for a long time desirous to obtain a degree of Doctor of Divinity for the Revd Ashbel Baldwin. For more than seven years, I have been an attentive observer of his publick administrations & general conduct, & in my opinion, he is an excellent Preacher, a sound Divine, and of competent learning. He is indefatigable in performing the duties of his office not only in his own Parishes but also in the neighboring Societies that are destitute of a Clergyman; particularly in visiting the sick & afflicted and upon all occasions zealous in promoting the general interest of religion and literature. He constantly attends two Parishes at considerable distance from each other, and has rarely failed to attend his appointments with them, during an administration of fourteen years, for which, the emoluments accruing to him have been very inconsiderable. An industrious and accomplished clergyman (in my opinion) is one of the first characters among men, and merits the highest honors that can

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be bestowed upon him. The clergy in this country are excluded from all secular honors & emoluments; they can aspire only to academical honors—Those corporations who are invested with the powers of conferring degrees, I conceive, hold them in trust for the benefit of society, for the encouragement of the younger classes and a reward to those who have deserved well of all mankind. Is it not therefore their duty to confer them when meritorious objects (such as I apprehend the present one to be) are presented to them? I hope therefor you will be so obliging as to procure a Degree for the Gentleman I have now recommended to you, which I shall consider a great favour conferred on me and the Church.

POLITICIANS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

While the clergy was, by far, the favored occupational group among those given honorary doctorates at Columbia and the University of North Carolina, at Harvard politicians (including judges and diplomats) outnumbered the preachers by one.³³ An even one-third of Harvard's honorary doctorates of the 1830-39 period were bestowed upon judges, diplomats, governors, and other political figures.

The conservatives seemed to be more numerous than the liberals among the politicians. Thus 18 recipients were drawn from the more conservative Federalist and Whig parties but only seven were Jacksonian Democrats.³⁴ One-half of the politicians were judges. Among them were Judge Joseph Hopkinson of the U. S. District Court, a conservative Federalist with little sympathy for the democratic spirit,³⁵ and Justice Smith Thompson of the U. S. Supreme Court (LL.D., Harvard, 1835), who had been a Jeffersonian Republican of moderately liberal views but who had voted with the conservative majority to uphold the Federal Fugitive Slave Act. James T. Austin (LL.D., Harvard, 1838), Attorney General for Massachusetts from 1832 to 1845 and a Harvard trustee, was a Whig who opposed anti-slavery agitation and had praised the mob which killed Elijah Parish Lovejoy, the anti-slavery reformer.³⁶ Interestingly enough, in 1937 Colby College gave an LL.D. to Herbert Hoover, who was the principal speaker at the institution's centennial memorial to Lovejoy. Three members of the Lovejoy family, two of them successful business leaders, were also given honorary degrees on the same occasion.

Also recipients of doctorates from Harvard in the 1830-39 period were

³³However, if professors of theology who were ordained ministers are included, the clergy would outnumber the politicians.

³⁴The political affiliation was found for 25 of the recipients of these three institutions.

³⁵See the *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 9, p. 223.

³⁶*Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 432.

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Governor John Davis of Massachusetts, a conservative Whig who had been a Federalist and was a bitter opponent of Jackson, and Congressman Edward Everett, well-known orator of his day (president of Harvard from 1846 to 1849). Everett's ten years of service in Congress were characterized in these words: "He represented the dominant conservatism of his state, showing great deference to the Southern feeling on the slavery question, supporting the Bank of the United States, and opposing what he termed the 'levellers'."³⁸

Among the less conservative politicians honored by Harvard was Lewis Cass (LL.D., 1836), Secretary of War at the time, formerly Governor of Michigan, and later a United States Senator, diplomat, and presidential candidate. He usually took a moderate position and was almost always on the side of "law and order."³⁹ Likewise, Supreme Court Justice John McLean (LL.D., 1839), a Democrat appointed to the Court by Jackson, was moderate on most social issues. Andrew Jackson was probably the most liberal recipient of a Harvard honorary degree in this decade.

The University of North Carolina, in the 1830's, gave one LL.D. to Edmund G. Badger, a local Whig politician, and another to Judge Thomas Ruffin, a trustee who was a Jeffersonian Republican.⁴⁰ The faculty and trustees of the University of North Carolina were probably more conservative than the students and general citizenry of the state.

The five politicians to whom Columbia gave honorary doctorates in the 1830-39 period included two judges, Jacob Sutherland of the New York State Supreme Court, and William Gaston of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. The latter, who was the one Catholic honored by Columbia in this decade, received LL.D.'s from four other institutions, including Harvard and Princeton. Although a resident of North Carolina, Gaston openly opposed slavery, saying in his commencement address at the University of North Carolina in 1832, "It is slavery which, more than any other cause, keeps us back in our career of improvement. It stifles industry . . . it discourages skill—it impairs our strength as a community, and poisons morals at the fountain head."⁴¹ One of the Whigs honored was Gulian C. Verplanck (LL.D., 1835), alumnus, unsuccessful Whig candidate for mayor

³⁷*Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 133.

³⁸*Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 223.

³⁹*Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 562.

⁴⁰The political affiliation was not found for the nine who were given D.D.'s by North Carolina.

⁴¹Battle, Kemp P., *History of the University of North Carolina*, Vol. I, p. 345.

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of New York City, ex-trustee and former Congressman.⁴² The one Democrat was New Jersey's ex-Governor Peter Dumont Vroom, who was first a Federalist but was elected to office on the Jackson ticket. The remaining politician honored by Columbia in this period was Thomas Gener, a former member of the Cuban Cortes who had been exiled for his political activities.⁴³

Holders of political office were a neglected group at Columbia compared to the clergy. In the 1830's, only five honorary degrees were given to the former and 25 to the latter. Nor did politicians seem to exercise much control over the distribution of honorary degrees. Even Daniel Webster's effort was ineffective in securing a degree for his scholarly friend, Joseph Green Cogswell, who was the head librarian of New York City's Astor Library and the holder of a German Ph.D. The following letter was sent by Webster to Trustee Jones on October 2, 1841:

I understand that it is in contemplation, by the faculty of Columbia College, to confer the Degree of L.L.D. upon Joseph G. Cogswell. I have known Mr. Cogswell, and his connexions, for twenty-five years. In early life he married the daughter of Gov. Gilman, of New Hampshire; but he has been a widower for a long time. His knowledge is very various. He has cultivated an acquaintance with many languages, ancient and modern; is quite a proficient in the natural sciences, and in the principles of moral and political philosophy. Having been some time practically engaged in the business of instruction, he has read and written much upon the general subject of Education. He has been a good deal abroad, and no bad representative of the literary characters of his country in Europe.

His knowledge of bibliography is extensive, and he keeps up well with the general progress of science and literature, in this productive age. Let me conclude, by speaking of the amiability and excellence of his private character, and of the regard and friendship which I have entertained for him, for many years.

Two letters in the Columbiana Collection show that statesmen were not always readily accepted as recipients. David Codwise, an alumnus of 51 years' standing, was unsuccessful in several efforts to secure a degree for Judge Sandford:

Allow me as one of the oldest alumni of Columbia College now living to renew the suggestion which I made last year, unfortunately too late, to have the degree of LLD conferred on Judge Sandford.

Knowing him to be a ripe scholar & an eminent jurist as the reports of his judicial decisions will confirm, I think the honor would be worthily conferred. That I am not alone in this opinion I enclose for your perusal a note which I received from Chan-

⁴²*Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 19, p. 253.

⁴³*Encyclopedie Universale Illustrata*, Vol. 25, p. 1216.

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cellor Sandford expressing similar views—My action in this matter is entirely without the privity or knowledge of Judge Sandford.

Hamilton Fish, one of Columbia's greatest statesmen, alumnus of over 20 years' standing and trustee for nearly a decade, was proposed for an honorary degree by Trustee Harison. The high social standing of Governor Fish was one of the reasons advanced for granting the degree. Harison's letter of February 25, 1849, to Trustee Ogden follows:

I have been endeavoring to see you for some days about the degree for the Governor but have been prevented by illness partly & twice by not finding you in yr office. Now that it has been proposed, it will never do to give it the go by.

But on the Merits—Seriously does our friend Moore think an L.L.D. should know anything necessarily of either Civil, Canon, Statute, or Common Law. What was *his* particular qualification in either or any branch? And yet the degree was never more worthily bestowed. What does Dr. Webster know about any law, save God's great law of order?

Now Fish is of the right age—He is of good blood—& more, of one of our very oldest families. He is an alumnus of the College. He distinguished himself in College & I am informed graduated head of his class. He proceeded in due course to A.M. He devoted himself to the legal profession; & his place in it, tho not in any walk that gave opportunity for distinction at the Bar, was always of one that had the highest respect of the Bench & the profession. His private Character—pure—without the slightest stain. His Public Services in Congress twice, Lt. Govr & at last Governor of the State. Has he done or written anything to detract from these merits? Nothing. It seems to me that if the degree was ever given in-course he might immediately demand & receive it. He has always given his attention to letters & is at least very respectable in the General Literature of his times.

But the objection is, *we trustees all know Mr. Fish familiarly. He is much younger than most of all of us and we do not consider him a great man.* Now for that we must ask the judgment of his fellow citizens. We must defer to their decision. I really consider the compliment is due to him as the first instance I believe (except perhaps John Jay) of an Alumnus and Trustee of the College *whilst such* being elevated to the office of Governor. And I am the more anxious because I think the compliment will react to the advantage of the college & to our own Honor.

I, therefore trust you will appoint an early day for the committee where at or anywhere else you may make such use of this note as you think proper. I expect to be absent all the week. The compliment will lose much of its value if the degree is postponed to Commencement, as Dr. Webster's is to be announced in Chapel on Monday, 5th March. I therefore suggest that the trustees meet on Saturday afternoon instead of Monday.

Harison's comments show that he did not consider the LL.D. as a law degree but as a mark of general achievement. President N. F. Moore, who evidently opposed the granting of the honor, had received the same degree from Columbia in 1825 when he was in his early forties. The Dr. Webster

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to whom Harison refers was Horace Webster, newly elected president of the College of the City of New York, who was given an LL.D. degree by Columbia a few days later. Harison's remarks that the trustees did not consider Fish a great man are amusing in retrospect for Fish alone of the trustees is widely remembered today. The Harison letter indicates again how important the personal elements were. Fish, in fact, did not obtain the degree until 1850 when President Moore had passed from the scene.

HONORARY DEGREES TO EDUCATORS AND TRUSTEES

Columbia, in the 1830's, gave approximately one-fourth, and North Carolina and Harvard one-sixth of their honorary doctorates to educators. All were college presidents or professors except William A. Muhlenberg, a school principal and an ordained Episcopal minister (D.D., Columbia, 1834).

The two educators honored by the University of North Carolina were clergymen. The Rev. George Howe (D.D., 1838) was a professor of theology and a South Carolina slave holder. Dr. Adam Empie (D.D., 1830) was the president of the College of William and Mary and also an Episcopalian Divine.

Harvard bestowed Doctor of Sacred Theology degrees upon all but two of the seven educators honored in the 1830 decade. The one college president given an S.T.D. was Jeremiah Day of Yale. Four of the six professors honored were from Harvard's own faculty. Of these four, three were not only professors of theology but also had graduated from the institution and served on its board of trustees (overseers). The fourth Harvard professor was Simon Greenleaf (LL.D., 1834), a teacher of law whose efforts were responsible, in part, for the rise of the Harvard Law School to its eminent position.

Columbia gave honorary doctorates to six college presidents and four to college professors. The fact that eight of the ten were given D.D.'s and three of the four professors were teachers in the theological seminaries indicates again the influence of religion in higher education during this period. Five of the six presidents were heads of denominational colleges, and the sixth, the Rev. James Marsh (D.D., Columbia, 1830), was president of the University of Vermont which was dominated by religious influences under his administration.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Tewksbury, Donald G., *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities before the Civil War*, p. 188.

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While the written records indicate that during this period the clergy were the most persistent seekers after honorary degrees, college presidents, professors, and trustees were also willing recipients. At least three men endeavored to make Rutgers' newly-elected president, A. B. Hasbrouck, a Doctor of Laws. On October 2, 1840, Thomas DeWitt wrote to Trustee Peter Jay as follows:

I have understood that the name of Hon. A. B. Hasbrouck had been suggested to the Committee of the Board of Trustees of Columbia College as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Laws at the approaching commencement. I trust you will not deem it obtrusive for me to address you this note. We are natives of the same place, (Kingston Ulster County) of the same age, and were school mates. Mr. Hasbrouck has throughout life sustained a most estimable character of high intellectual, moral, and religious worth. He graduated at Yale College in 1810 sustaining an excellent reputation as a scholar. He devoted himself to the profession of the law, in which he has been engaged with honor and success. In the meantime he has not neglected the cultivation of General Literature, and in some departments of it is a ripe scholar. He has heretofore represented his district in the Congress of the United States. He has recently been chosen by a unanimous vote to the Presidency of Rutgers College, upon the duties of which he has just entered. The choice has drawn forth the united, and strong sentiment of public approbation, and confidence. Sincerely believing that the high honor proposed will be worthily bestowed, I have felt a freedom in expressing to you my personal conviction of his standing, and worth arising from a long acquaintance.

Hasbrouck received the degree; his cause was probably helped by the personal factor. Professor Lewis Beck of Rutgers College was a brother of Columbia's Trustee John Beck, who wrote the following letter to Trustee Knox on September 26, 1940:

A few days ago I received a letter from my brother, Prof. Lewis C. Beck, of Rutgers College, of which the following is an extract. "Several of us are anxious to have the degree of L.L.D. conferred upon our new President Mr. Hasbrouck, & I have thought that it might, perhaps be managed at the ensuing commencement at Columbia College. A suggestion from yourself or Dr. Knox would perhaps avail the thing and it would, if accomplished be highly gratifying to the friends of the college & help us along very much—"

The character of Mr. Hasbrouck stands so high, and I believe deservedly, as a man of talent and acquirement, that I believe there would be no difficulty in securing the vote of the Board, provided he receives the recommendation of your committee. Should the above strike you favorably will you be so good as to bring it before your committee for consideration. . . .

Among the recipients of the six Columbia honorary doctorates in the 1830's which were granted to college presidents was Henry Vethake (LL.D.,

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1836), then president of Washington College in Virginia and the author of a work on political economy. He was probably one of the most conservative recipients of this period. He opposed most humanitarian reforms as economically unsound, held that trade unions violated property rights, and opposed laws for shorter hours for labor.⁴⁵ A short note from Thomas L. Wells, an alumnus and later a trustee, to Trustee John L. Lawrence resulted in a degree for Vethake.

Columbia bestowed on its own trustees nearly one-sixth of the honorary doctorates given in the 1830's, but it seemed less interested in honoring the trustees of other institutions. In June, 1832, Samuel H. Cox, one of the trustees of New York University, addressed a communication to Columbia's board of trustees in which he proposed what in effect would be an exchange of honorary degrees between the boards of both institutions. If Columbia would honor their men, N. Y. U. would reciprocate. The letter is written in quite a dramatic style and does not name the candidate, the Rev. Archibald McClay, until the end.

With very humble claims to your consideration, I venture to propose to your notice the name of a respected clerical gentleman of this city, with the view, should it meet your favourable judgment, of requesting that it may be included among those to be announced at your ensuing Commencement as *Doctors in Divinity*.

That Gentleman is, in connection with the University of the City of New York, one of my honoured colleagues of the Council; who on account of his age, accomplishments, is even *customarily* saluted by the laity as if already so distinguished. He appertains to a denomination, different, Gentlemen, from my own, and probably from yours—a reason, though of secondary note, why *I* thus spontaneously move in this matter. His character, attainments, manners, general standing, and present influence in the city, of which he has been many years a resident, seem to vindicate the propriety of this measure; the fact that the venerable Dr. Stanford is the *only member* of the same denomination in our city so distinguished, may be an additional reason in favor of this application. Since my connection with the council of the University, I have had my acquaintance with the gentleman referred to increased and my respect for his character proportionately advanced. Should it occur to any of you, Gentlemen, that with chartered powers our council might easily perform the act and possibly with more propriety; I would rejoin—

1. That we are too new as yet for such creative acts.
2. That at any time we should feel a just delicacy against conferring an honorary degree on one of our own number; & 3.

That should it ever occur in the future, as possibly it might, that our relations in any case should be reversed, for one, though I could not speak for my colleagues—of course, I should be very happy to reciprocate the Courtesy and have no doubt

⁴⁵*Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 19, p. 262.

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that mine would be the pleasure equally of others with whom I count it my honour to act. The name occurs on the next page.

With unfeigned good wishes, Gentlemen, towards yourselves and the noble institution of your care. . . .

P.S. Several of my colleagues of the Council & all to whom I have named the matter, deliberately and fully concur in the preport of this Communication. S.H.C.

Cox evidently had no scruples against trading degrees, yet he hesitated to have a newly organized institution grant them so soon⁴⁶ and was reluctant to have the N. Y. U. trustees confer honors upon themselves. Columbia did not accept Cox's offer and the Rev. McClay was not honored.

OTHER OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS HONORED

All the men given doctorates in the 1830's by Columbia and the University of North Carolina, and all but four of Harvard's recipients, were clergymen, educators, politicians, or lawyers. Of the four exceptions, two were physicians and two were authors, one of whom was Washington Irving (LL.D., Harvard, 1832, and Columbia, 1829). Authors and artists very rarely received honorary degrees in the pre-Civil War period.

While no lawyers were honored by North Carolina in the 1830's, at Harvard and Columbia they received one-tenth of all the doctorates, a larger share than they received in the period studied both before and after this decade. Columbia gave LL.D.'s to five lawyers and Harvard honored four. Most of these lawyers apparently held conservative views. Four of the six lawyers whose political affiliations were found had been Federalists and the other two were Whigs. Peter Augustus Jay, son of John Jay, was honored by both Columbia and Harvard in the 1830 decade. A Federalist in his early years, he always remained so at heart, opposing universal suffrage and observing with regret the weakening power of judges. His liberal tendencies extended as far as favoring the abolition of slavery in New York State and the building of the Erie Canal.⁴⁷ The fact that Peter Augustus Jay was Chairman of Columbia's trustees probably did not make either Harvard or Columbia hesitate to grant the degree. The following resolution of the Columbia board of trustees shows how easy it was to disregard temporarily even the most elaborate rules of procedure. Jay, of course, was not present when the resolution was passed.

⁴⁶New York University (then called University of the City of New York) conferred its first in-course degrees in 1833 and first honorary degrees in 1834.

⁴⁷*Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 10, p. 11.

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RESOLVED, unanimously that the rule respecting the nomination to honorary degrees be suspended for this meeting.

The following honorary degrees were then ordered to be conferred at the ensuing commencement, viz: The degree of Doctor of Laws upon Peter Augustus Jay and Gulian C. Verplanck of New York, and William Gaston of N. Carolina.⁴⁸

James Emott, lawyer and former Federalist politician, received an LL.D., Columbia's highest honor, in 1833. At the Semi-Centennial Anniversary of the college in 1837 three lawyers, David B. Ogden, a Whig and former Federalist, John Duer, who had also been a Federalist, and George Griffin were given LL.D.'s. Ogden and Duer were Columbia trustees. The anniversary was also the occasion for bestowing ten other honorary degrees.

Harvard honored three lawyers in addition to Jay: John Pickering (LL.D., 1835), City Attorney for Boston and also a soldier and linguist; James L. Petigru (LL.D., 1837), former Federalist and Southern slave owner; and Samuel Hoar (LL.D., 1838), first a Federalist and later a Whig, and an opponent of slavery.

Harvard's honors in the 1830's in contrast with those of the Revolutionary period went, at least in part, to individuals satisfied with the status quo. The awarding of honorary degrees at Harvard in these two periods reflected to a considerable extent the dominant social pattern of the Harvard constituency. Revolutionary Boston with its unique tea parties was reflected in the honors given to Generals Gates, Lafayette, and Washington, while the Federalist lawyers of the 1830's were probably representative of the social opinion of the "better" people of this decade.

Most of the recipients of these honorary doctorates were Americans and at each of the three institutions residents of the local state outnumbered the others. All of North Carolina's awards were given to Americans, but six of Harvard's awards and three of Columbia's in the 1830's went to foreigners. Harvard honored European university teachers, Richard Whately (S.T.D., 1831) of Oxford University, and Karl Mittermaier (LL.D., 1836), Professor of Law at Heidelberg; three Canadians, two judges and a physician; and an Englishman, James Grahame, a historian who wrote an enthusiastically favorable American history. Columbia gave awards to a preacher from Canada, a college president from the Barbadoes, and a politician from Cuba.

On April 23, 1793, Columbia's Professor of Mathematics, John Kemp,

⁴⁸*Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Columbia College*, Vol. III, pp. 459-460.

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who held two degrees from Scotland's Aberdeen University, wrote to Trustee Duane requesting that an honorary doctorate be conferred on two Scottish friends.

I use the freedom to request you to propose to the Trustees the Revd. Andrew Jaffray, Minister of the Gospel at Lockmahan as a Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Divinity and William Ogilvie, Professor of Humanity in the University & Kings College, Aberdeen, as a Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Laws. The former has been upwards of forty years an ornament to the Church to which he belongs and a strenuous promoter of the Christian religion both by example and precepts. Nor has his doctrines been confined to the pulpit. Many valuable testimonies of his learning and abilities have issued from the press. The latter has been a Professor for 30 years in Kings College & is esteemed one of its ornaments. He is deservedly placed among the first literary characters of the Country he lives in & is the Author of many learned publications, a great advocate for liberty & the rights of man, & was a warm and decided friend to the revolution which took place in this country when the prospect was most obscure. A publication of his on the right of property in land which I send along with this is curious, original, & I dare say will afford you a considerable degree of entertainment. . . . If the resolve of the Trustees which makes it necessary that candidates for the degree of Docr shall be nominated three months previous to the conferring thereof extends to foreigners I wish no infringement thereof as the board if they think proper can confer the same three months hence. If however it should not extend to foreigners as some of the Board think it does not the conferring of the above degrees will add one more to the many obligations I am already under to the trustees. My only object is to form and keep up a connection between our colleges and Similar Institutions in Europe which will be of advantage to us. If our liberry [sic] can be increased in an honourable manner Worldly wisdom is not to be despised.

Both Jaffray and Ogilvie were given degrees *in absentia*. The former, it should be noted, was a relative of Kemp's wife. In 1793 Kemp urged that honorary degrees be used to establish connections between colleges.

Unable to attend a board meeting, Trustee Mason wrote a note requesting that his British friend, the Rev. John Phillip, be given a D.D. He pointed out that the ministers of other than the recognized churches in England received few awards since most honorary degrees went to representatives of the dominant social institutions. His letter of June 7, 1819, follows:

Being necessarily hindered from attending the Board of Trustees this morning, I beg leave to submit the enclosed to their consideration, and to express a hope that it will receive their favorable notice. I need not state to the board the difficulties which embarrass the attainment of Academical honors in the British Universities, by persons not attached to either of the established churches. I shall only add that the gentlemen whose signatures recommend the application for Mr. Phillip, are personally known to me, and occupy an honorable standing at home.

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One of the leading ministers of the day, William Buell Sprague, wrote to Columbia's president asking, in vain, for a D.D. for an Irish friend. The fact that Sprague was of a different denomination and did not know President Duer personally, accounts in part for his failure. Sprague praised his man highly and mentioned his efforts to combat Popery in Ireland. Although he could not induce Columbia to give Urwich a degree, he did find a college in Connecticut which granted his request.

Some foreigners had persistent backers. The efforts of the Rev. Colton to secure a degree for his English friend are indicated in Bishop Onderdonk's letter of September 21, 1839 to Columbia's president:

Sometime in the Summer the Rev. Calvin Colton applied to me to use my influence for getting from Columbia College the degree of D.D. for a friend of his, the Rev. Tammel Fennell, D.D., Fellow and Tutor of Queens College, Cambridge. I stated my doubts whether the degree would be received or acknowledged in England, as I had understood that Washington College had conferred it on the Rev. Thomas Hartwell Horne, who had, nevertheless, in his publications retained the title merely of A.M. I declined therefore entertaining the subject, stating, however, that would I be assured to the contrary, I would have no objections to considering the case. Here I supposed the matter would end. Mr. Colton, however, wrote to his friend on the subject, and on my return home, last Saturday, I found the enclosed letter. Mr. Colton has certainly construed too strongly what I may have said touching any participation of mine in the affair.

Of Dr. Fennell, I know nothing save on Mr. Colton's authority, who evidently considers him a superior man. It is fair, however, to presume that a D.D. of Cambridge cannot be undeserving of the honour sought.

As would be expected, the degree was not granted.

The meager evidence regarding foreigners seems to indicate that a smaller share of written requests for degrees for this group were acceded to than in the case of Americans. Half of the foreigners were refused, as compared with about one-third of the American nominees.

While many foreigners were anxious to secure honorary degrees from American institutions, there were exceptions. The Rev. Andrew M. Thomson of Scotland was awarded a D.D. by Columbia in 1818 but he declined it.⁴⁹ At least one American clergyman, James Romeyn, refused a Columbia D.D. degree after it was awarded in 1838. A list of those who have refused honorary degrees, together with their reasons, would, of course, be highly revealing. Such refusals are usually oral and are polite rejections rather than a statement of the basic reasons for the action.

⁴⁹*Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. LVI, p. 234.

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The honorary doctorates given in the 1830's were limited largely to men who were college graduates. Over four-fifths of all those honored by the colleges under discussion had in-course degrees. Columbia gave 84% and Harvard 81% of its honors to such persons. However, only 56% of North Carolina's honorary doctors had earned degrees. Of the nine whose academic background was found, only five were college graduates. Many of these colleges graduates were also alumni of the institution making the award. Harvard bestowed 55% of its honorary doctorates in the 1830-39 period on its own alumni; Columbia, 28% and North Carolina, nine per cent.

Harvard greatly exceeded the other two institutions in granting honorary degrees to its own faculty members in the 1830's. Thirteen of Harvard's faculty members (including those who served on its teaching staff before or after the honorary degree was conferred) were honored, while Columbia recognized only one of its professors in this fashion. North Carolina gave no honorary doctorates to its faculty in the 1830's, but some were extended in earlier years. The first awards were made in 1799 when "a modest beginning was made of granting honorary degrees, the Faculty nominating and the Trustees confirming."⁵⁰ North Carolina was one of the first institutions, if not the first, to put the selection of honorary degree recipients into the hands of the faculty, and in 1799 when this power was first used the faculty did not forget themselves. Three of the first four honorary degrees went to this body which then had only five members. The fourth degree was bestowed upon a state legislator who later became a trustee. Harvard's own trustees (including those who served before or after the honorary degree was conferred) received 36% of all honorary doctorates this college granted in the 1830's. At the University of North Carolina, 18% (two of the eleven granted) went to trustees, and at Columbia 15% of the recipients served on the board which had the power to grant honors. James Walker and Edward Everett, who later became presidents of Harvard, were given honorary doctorates by the college in the 1830-39 decade. Harvard, to a greater extent than Columbia or North Carolina, bestowed its honors on those connected with the institution.

The selection of recipients for honorary degrees was an important function of the board of trustees to judge by the amount of original cor-

⁵⁰Battle, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 162.

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respondence and other documents in the files of Columbia University's pre-Civil War trustee boards. These documents are invaluable sources of information in many respects.

Columbia's trustees, as well as those of most other colleges both then and now, selected the persons who were to be honored. The presidents of Columbia were members of its board of trustees and, as the letters show, had considerable influence in the selection of recipients. Before 1840, the "Standing Committee" of the board had as one of its functions the receiving of applications for honorary degrees and the consideration of the merits of prospective recipients. The following motion setting up a special committee to do this work was passed on September 7, 1840:

RESOLVED, unanimously, that a committee be raised to be denominated the *Committee of Honours*; that it consist of five members, to be appointed by ballot; and that all vacancies therein be filled in the same manner; that one member of the committee shall go out of office on the first Monday of November in each year; . . . and that all propositions for the conferring of honorary degrees be referred to this committee, to consider and report upon; and that no such degree shall be conferred unless the proposition shall have been reported upon by it, unless by the unanimous consent of the Board.⁵¹

Individuals who received honorary degrees were not required to be present. At Columbia and most of the colleges in the pre-Civil War period, the conferring of honorary degrees at commencement consisted merely of publicly reading the names of those chosen. Sometimes the diplomas were mailed to the recipients and not always very promptly. Robert Emory was awarded a D.D. in 1846 but when on January 30, 1847, he wrote to Columbia's president, he had not as yet received a diploma or official notification of the honor bestowed upon him:

While in London, last summer, I received, through the kindness of a friend, the intelligence that my Alma Mater had conferred on me the degree of Doctor of Divinity. I immediately acknowledged privately, through the same channel, my high sense of honour, postponing a more formal acknowledgement until I should receive official information of the fact. As I have received no such communication, however, it has occurred to me that perhaps it may not be customary with you, as it is with us, to give notice individually to those on whom such honours are conferred, but that you rely on the announcement in the public journals as sufficient. Lest, therefore, I should appear wanting in respect to the institution and to the friends, whose too partial kindness, I am sure, has procured me this mark of distinction, I take the liberty of addressing to you this communication—to ask you to make my acknowledgement of the honour in such form as may be customary with you; and to assure you that no other reasons than those assigned, have occasioned this delay.

⁵¹*Minutes of the Trustees of Columbia College*, Vol. IV, p. 56.

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In 1830, Columbia was seven years behind in awarding diplomas to her honorary degree recipients. The board of trustees passed this resolution to take care of the oversight:

RESOLVED that the Faculty do prepare the proper diplomas for the honorary degrees to be hereafter conferred; and that the Faculty do also prepare the proper diplomas for the honorary degrees conferred during the last 7 years, and for which diplomas have not yet been given, . . . that no fees be charged for such diplomas.⁵²

The Rev. J. J. Scott was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree in 1854 but his diploma was not mailed until the following year and it took almost an additional year for the diploma to go from New York to Florida. In his letter of thanks for the diploma Dr. Scott wrote that the honor would stimulate him to more and better work. John Canfield Spencer, former Secretary of the Treasury, was given an honorary LL.D. by Columbia in 1847 and his diploma was quite promptly mailed to him. In his letter of acknowledgment to Columbia's president, he indicated that he thought that many institutions—other than Columbia, of course—gave too many honors.

I have duly received the Diploma of "Doctor in utroque jure" conferred on me by the Trustees of Columbia College at the last Commencement, So kindly forwarded by you together with a catalogue of her graduates and a historical Sketch of the College.

For this distinguished and highly valued testimonial, I beg leave to return my thanks to the Board of Trustees, collectively and individually; and to Say that from no Literary Institution in this country would it be received with more gratification than from Columbia. Always distinguished for her thorough and elegant classical instruction and for the extent and soundness of her mathematical course, and noted for the polish and ability of her graduates. She has avoided that profusion in dispensing her honors, in which too many other Institutions have indulged. I feel it to be indeed an honor, to receive a degree from such a college. . .

Foreigners usually received their degrees *in absentia*. If a candidate had written a book, frequently his friends would submit a copy with recommendations in his behalf. Such was done in the case of the Rev. John Blakely of Scotland. This volume, *The Theology of Inventions or Manifestations of Deity in the Works of Art*, is now part of the Columbian Collection. The basic proposition of his book was "That mechanical inventions . . . are, and ought to be viewed as emanations of the wisdom, power and beneficence of God." God made possible the building of cities and therefore, contended the author, the saying, "God made the country but man made the town" was an "atheistic adage." Blakely made a quaint application of his fundamental hypothesis to military weapons by arguing

⁵²Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Columbia College, Vol. III, p. 319.

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that in wars necessary to bring tyrants to justice God brings victory to the just cause by enabling its soldiers to invent the most deadly weapons. In a letter of thanks to Columbia's president, Blakely declared:

The honorary degree which the Trustees of Columbia College have so handsomely conferred, is highly appreciated, both by the Christian public, and the Author of 'The Theology of Inventions.' I did not expect such a degree so early in life, and having hitherto done so little to recommend me to the notice of the literary world, but I trust that grace shall be given me to employ that influence which it confers for the elucidation of truth and the advancement of righteousness. . . .

I feel much encouraged by the countenance which my first publication has obtained in America and by the prompt acknowledgement of your college. I receive your degree with gratitude to God and resolution to devote myself ever to future labours.

Please express my deep sense of gratitude to the Trustees of Columbia College. I shall ever remember their institution with sincere regard, and should God spare me, I hope yet to present a practical illustration of the feelings which I now desire to convey.

CONCLUSIONS

From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that the following considerations aided a candidate in getting an honorary degree in the pre-Civil War years:

Being an alumnus of the institution.

Having the support of someone closely connected with the institution, such as trustee, president, or faculty member.

Residing in the area served by the institution.

Being connected with the church from which the institution received its support. (None of the Episcopal bishops included in this correspondence and few of the clergy of the church were refused degrees.)

The absence of these considerations accounted, in part, for the failure to receive honors of those mentioned in the Columbia correspondence. Not one of the unsuccessful candidates was a graduate of Columbia; most of the friends who supported them had no connection with the institution and lived outside of New York City; and very few of those refused were recommended by Episcopal bishops.



"John Joseph Kramer. Distinguished son of our dear Alma Mater, honored representative of Industry in this great commonwealth, whose courageous leadership of sound public enterprises and generous beneficences to the cause of higher education have been outstanding in these troubled days, I welcome you to the fellowship of honorable men."

"Gee, thanks."

Carl Rose in *The New Yorker*, June 11, 1938. Reprinted by special permission.

CHAPTER III

Opposition to the Honorary Ph.D. (1860-1900)

The number and variety of honorary degrees given by the various colleges and universities from 1872 to 1900 have been made available in government reports. Nearly two-thirds (65%) were doctorates, and most of the remainder were masters (31%). Less than 4% were honorary bachelor degrees. Honorary D.D.'s, LL.D.'s, and Ph.D.'s made up over 95% of the honorary doctorates bestowed (D.D.'s, 59%; LL.D.'s, 29%; and Ph.D.'s, 7%).

Three types of honorary doctorates, Doctor of Science (Sc.D.), Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.), and Doctor of Letters (Litt.D.), which were frequently conferred after 1900, first appeared in the Government reports in the latter part of the 1872-1900 period, but each accounted for less than 1% of the doctorates given during these years. The L.H.D. was given at Columbia as an earned degree between 1884 and 1886, and as an honorary degree from 1887 to 1903; it was superseded by the honorary Litt.D. in 1904. Columbia gave its first Sc.D. in 1901.¹ The government reports for 1872-1900 list 36 varieties of honorary degrees, most of which were given only a few times. Among the rarer specimens were Bachelor of Oratory, Master of Painting, Doctor of Physical Arts, and Doctor of Dental Medi-

¹*Columbia University Alumni Register, 1754-1931*, p. xii and 1183

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cine. In the 1870 decade, Harvard awarded the last named degree to six teachers in the University's new dental school. It had given its first earned dental degree (D.M.D.) in 1869.

The D.M.D. as an honorary degree was not included in the government reports after the 1870's nor was it given *honoris causa* by Harvard after this period. In granting honorary D.M.D.'s Harvard did what many other institutions, large and small, have done before and since: it conferred degrees on its own faculty members in an attempt to erase their academic deficiencies and raise their prestige. The most popular honorary doctorate at Harvard during the 1870's was the LL.D., which was given to 75% of the recipients. The others were S.T.D.'s (10%), and D.M.D.'s (15%).

The few honorary doctorates given by the University of Wisconsin and the University of Nebraska in this period were all LL.D.'s. At Columbia 40% and at North Carolina 35% of the honors were LL.D.'s; 60% of the total at these two institutions were D.D.'s or S.T.D.'s, an indication of the strength of the religious influences even at a state-controlled institution. One degree at the University of North Carolina was an honorary Ph.D. At Columbia, the D.D. was gradually superseded during the 1870's by the S.T.D. This institution's first degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology was given in 1858; the succeeding years up to 1877, when the last D.D. was granted, saw fewer D.D.'s and more S.T.D.'s bestowed. This change, in which Columbia took the cue from Harvard, was probably stimulated by the increasingly frequent granting of the D.D. by many small colleges and universities. The desire of the Episcopal clergyman for the less common S.T.D.—another impetus to the change from the D.D.—was evident to the editor of *The Independent* who wrote: "It is also noticeable that the style of doctorate which is written S.T.D. is much affected among Episcopalians and is especially appreciated."²

During the 1870's, the number of honorary doctorates conferred by the seven institutions selected for intensive study—Harvard, Columbia, the Universities of North Carolina, Wisconsin, Nebraska, California, and Smith College—was not extremely high. In this ten-year period Columbia gave the most honorary doctorates, 48, while Harvard granted 41. Both of these institutions gave approximately the same number as they had 40 years previously in the 1830 decade. In the 1870 decade the University of North Carolina conferred only 20 doctorates (but this was almost double

²*The Independent*, Vol. 34, p. 16, August 17, 1882.

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the number given in the 1830's) and the University of Wisconsin gave only seven honorary doctorates. The first degree conferred by the University of Nebraska was an honorary Doctor of Laws granted to Episcopal Bishop Robert Clarkson in 1872, one year after the University was founded. The first earned bachelor's degrees were conferred the following year on a class of two. In this decade Nebraska awarded only one other honorary doctorate. It was given to A. J. Poppleton, a railroad lawyer and former politician from Omaha. Smith College, founded in 1875, conferred no honorary degrees until 1886. The University of California, founded in 1868, gave none until 1881, when an honorary Ph.D. was given to Robert E. C. Stearnes.³

Over three-fifths of the men given honorary doctorates by these five universities were between 40 and 60 years of age and less than one-tenth were under 40. Of the seven honored at the University of Wisconsin, all were over the age of 50 and the median age was 56. At Harvard the median age was 55, but the range was from 31 to 80. There were two men in their thirties, both teachers in the dental school who, with four other faculty members, received D.M.D.'s. The octogenarian was the English author and educator, Thomas Carlyle. North Carolina honored men between the ages of 44 and 67 with a median age of 54. The age range at Columbia was from 35 to 75, with a median age of 50. The two men honored by Nebraska were 46 and 48. The median age of the recipients at Columbia and North Carolina in the 1870's was 12 years higher than that in the 1830's, while at Harvard the median in the 1870's showed an increase of six years over that of the 1830's. This reflects a trend to honor men who were well established rather than those in the early stages of their careers.

Men living in the state in which the institution was located were favored for honorary degrees in the 1870's. Both of the men who were given honorary LL.D.'s by Nebraska, and all but one of those honored by Wisconsin were local residents. So also were half of the group at North Carolina and Columbia, and three-fifths at Harvard. Most of the remaining recipients were citizens of other states while a few were foreigners. Wisconsin and Columbia each gave one degree to a foreigner, while Harvard honored five.

Local individuals honored were less important than those from other

³*University of California Graduates, 1864-1905.* Prior to 1868 the College of California, which the University of California replaced, gave three honorary doctorates and 17 honorary masters, 1865-1867, *ibid.*, p. 13. After Stearnes' degree only four more honorary degrees were given before 1901.

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states,⁴ as measured by the *Dictionary of American Biography*. Fifty per cent of the latter made the *D.A.B.* while only 42% of the local men were included. At Harvard this difference was even more pronounced. More than 90% of the out-of-state group were of sufficient importance to be in the *D.A.B.*, but only 54% of the Massachusetts men were included. The University of Wisconsin ranks first among the five in the percentage of recipients (83%), local and out-of-state combined, who made the *D.A.B.* Harvard's percentage for the same period was 67; Columbia's, 35; and that of the University of North Carolina, 20.

The distinction of the individuals selected, if the *D.A.B.* is a reliable measure, was definitely lower than in the preceding periods studied. In contrast with the 56% of Columbia's recipients in the 1830-39 period, 35% of the men honored in the 1870's were included in the *D.A.B.* Harvard's decline was from 77% in 1787, to 75% in the 1830's, to 67% in the 1870's. There seems to be some relationship, especially in the cases of Columbia and North Carolina, between the increase in the number of degrees conferred and a decline in the per cent of recipients in the *D.A.B.*

The strength of the Protestant tradition in this period is shown by the fact that at all of these institutions every recipient whose church membership was found was a Protestant. At Harvard, the Unitarians received over two-fifths of the honors, a considerably smaller share than they had obtained 40 years earlier.

The fractions and percentages given here are based on the total for whom the affiliation was found, not the total group. In most cases, the individual's religious affiliation was not found. The biographical dictionaries generally provide such information only about persons either actively concerned with church work or deeply interested in it. By the same token, the limited data available may be more significant than full records of purely nominal "affiliation." The same point applies to political sympathies which are discussed on the following pages.

In general, the Episcopalians predominated. At Columbia, 84% of the honors went to this group, an even higher percentage than in the 1830's; at the University of North Carolina, three of the five recipients whose church membership was found were Episcopalians; and at the University of Wisconsin, two out of three are known to have professed

⁴Foreigners are excluded in this comparison as they were not, as a rule, included in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

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this faith. "The Episcopalian,"⁵ wrote the editor of *The Independent*, "have 65 bishops, all doctors of divinity, and 3,401 other clergy, of whom 480 have the same degree, or 545 in all, being one in nearly 6½, a number which suggests a great appreciation on the part of the trustees of colleges." The Presbyterians did nearly as well, the editor found. Nearly one out of eight of their ministers (610 out of 5,086) were D.D.'s. He found most of the "Doctors" located in "a few large cities and ecclesiastical centers"; very few were in the smaller communities.

Three-fifths of all the recipients honored by the University of North Carolina in this decade were clergymen, and 56% of Columbia's degrees went to this group. Religious influences seem to have been weaker at Harvard, for there only 5% were given to gentlemen of the cloth. This does not include teachers of theology, as they have been classified as college professors.

Political party membership was found for one-tenth to one-half of the recipients of the honors from each of these institutions. Of Harvard's honorary doctors, party membership was found in 13 cases out of 41. Ten of these (77%) were Republicans and three were Democrats. In this decade Harvard bestowed 41% of her laurels (17 doctorates) on holders of political office. Four of these degrees went to Governors of Massachusetts. Two Presidents, Ulysses Grant and Rutherford B. Hayes, accepted LL.D.'s. Three honorary degrees were given to Cabinet members, two to Attorney-Generals, and one to a Secretary of State. The Secretary of State was Hamilton Fish, on whom, as noted above, the Columbia trustees hesitated a decade before to confer an LL.D. Harvard also gave LL.D.'s to two Senators, a Supreme Court Justice, and a Justice of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts. One of the Senators was the liberal Carl Schurz, who had taken part in the Revolution of 1848 in Germany. On the other hand, one of the justices honored was Nathan Clifford, an arch conservative who had been on the bench since 1858.

Columbia gave only one doctorate to a holder of political office, a Congressman. However, several of the lawyers honored had served earlier as public officials. The political affiliation was found for only one-eighth of those degrees in the 1870-79 period; but of those found, one-half were Democrats and one-half Republicans. At the University of North Carolina, both of the men whose political affiliation was found were Democrats.

⁵*The Independent*, Vol. 34, p. 16, August 17, 1882.

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North Carolina gave doctorates to six holders of political office (30% of all its honorary doctorates, 1870-79). Four of the men were judges, one was Solicitor General of the United States, and the other, who received the only honorary Ph.D. conferred by this institution, was the Commissioner of Agriculture for Tennessee. Three of the seven honored by the University of Wisconsin were politicians, including a Governor of the state and a Supreme Court judge. Both men for whom party membership was found were Republicans. The University of Nebraska honored only two individuals in this decade. One, a lawyer, was a Democrat; the political affiliation of the other was not found.

As in earlier periods, a large share of awards went to those having some connection with the institution. Harvard gave 46% of its honorary doctorates to alumni; the University of North Carolina gave 35%; and Columbia 17%. The new state universities of Wisconsin and Nebraska, with few and very young graduates, gave no honorary degrees to alumni. Harvard and Columbia gave a smaller share of their honors to alumni in the 1870's than in the previous periods studied, but at North Carolina there was an increase from 9% in the 1830's to 35% in the 1870's.

Although University trustees represented a comparatively small group of the persons considered eligible for honorary degrees, they received a sizeable proportion of the awards. In most universities, they also chose those to be honored. Harvard, in 1870, conferred 15% of its honorary doctorates on its own trustees;⁶ Wisconsin gave 14% (one person out of the seven honored); North Carolina, 10%; and Columbia, 2%.

Some institutions gave their own faculty members special consideration. Fourteen of Harvard's 41 doctorates in the 1870 decade were presented to its own faculty members. Wisconsin gave two of its seven honors to its faculty; North Carolina, one out of 20; and Columbia, one out of 48. This proportion was slightly higher at North Carolina and Harvard than in the previous periods. None of these institutions conferred honorary degrees on its own president during this decade.

The Harvard recipients having a personal connection with the institution received fewer places per capita in the *D.A.B.* than did the total Harvard group. Two-thirds of all Harvard recipients had biographies in the *D.A.B.*; approximately one-half of its alumni and trustees and one-third

⁶Trustees are known as Overseers at Harvard. This 15% included all recipients who were reported as serving at some time on the board, including before, after, or at the time the degree was conferred.

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of its faculty members so honored were considered important enough to be included.

The post-Civil War decades eventually marked a decline in honorary doctorates for ministers, but the 1870-79 period was the peak for clergymen at Columbia. Fifty-six per cent of the 48 honorary doctorates conferred by Columbia in this decade went to ministers, as compared to 54% in the 1830's and 7% in the 1907-16 period. A brief note sufficed to obtain an honorary degree for a bishop. Trustee Benjamin I. Haight secured an S.T.D. for a new Episcopal bishop merely by writing to the Committee on Honors as follows: "I would also suggest to the Committee that they recommend for the degree of S.T.D. the newly consecrated Bishop of Cape Palmas, Africa, the Rev. *John Gottlieb Auer* according to our usual custom."

The Rev. John H. Clinch, Chaplain of Public Institutions of the City of Boston, was a clergymen whose achievements were not sufficient to place him in the general biographical dictionaries. Nevertheless, he was given an S.T.D. by Columbia in 1874 because of the efforts of his friend, Trustee Haight. In his letter of February 24, 1874, to his fellow trustees on the Committee on Honors, Haight brought the testimonials of two dead men to bear and promised to furnish more testimonials if necessary:

On the other page you have a Testimonial in behalf of the Rev. Jos. H. Clinch whom was nominated by me for a S.T.D., from a dear friend of mine who departed this life only a few weeks after he penned it—the Rev. Dr. Babcock of Dedham, Mass.

Not long before his death, Bishop Eastburn named Mr. Clinch to me as one well qualified for the degree.

I hope the Com. on Honors will report his name.

If further testimonials are desired, I can furnish them & will do so on being notified.

This letter was written on the back of the testimonial which the Rev. Samuel B. Babcock had written only a short time before his death. Babcock (S.T.D., Columbia, 1870) had served a long pastorate for the Episcopal Church at Dedham, Massachusetts. His letter of August, 1873, to Trustee Haight is almost poetical in its praise:

We were speaking recently of Rev. Mr. Clinch of So. Boston.

He has been my intimate & beloved friend for two score years. Joseph Hart Clinch came to Mass. from the Provinces when he had just received Orders. We have very few among us so accomplished in scholarship, so Courteous in manner, so Catholic in spirit, so consistent in character both as man and Christian. But for his natural retiredness, he would have been long ago among our conspicuous men. His attain-

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ments entitle him to hold the highest position. He is our Chief Examining Chaplain for the Diocese which alone would indicate his scholarship. Reared in the Church he loved her ways ever adhering to her principles steadfastly. When I speak of him it is without misgivings or hesitation. Clinch is a true & noble fellow.

I mourn for his recent sorrow, & pray God may sanctify the bereavement to his soul's peace.

Most of the correspondence on honorary degrees in the Columbiana Archives concerned obscure men and, for the most part, the more obscure the candidate, the more letters there were supporting him. Undoubtedly it took more pressure, in most cases, to secure honorary degrees for men of lesser achievements and fame. The Rev. Clinch had the support of Trustee Haight, Bishop Eastburn (who died in 1872), and the Rev. Babcock (who died in 1873). With the backing of these three men Clinch secured the degree.

College professors, who were second only to the clergy in obtaining honorifics, received nearly two-fifths of the honors given by Harvard in the years 1870-79. At Columbia, they received 17%; at Wisconsin, 14%; but at North Carolina, none. This period showed an increase for both Harvard and Columbia in the proportion of degrees given to professors. Part of this increase may have been the result of strenuous efforts by the recipients' friends.

One of the most persistent campaigns revealed in the Columbiana correspondence was in behalf of a Professor of Greek at Rutgers. The manager of this campaign was the Rev. Alfred Stubbs, who wrote the following letter (which, incidentally, casts revealing light on the practice of "trading" degrees) to Trustee Haight on March 30, 1874:

I enclose you a note received from Dr. Howard Crosby, Chancellor of the University of N. Y. I have also seen his [Cooper's] diploma of D.C.L. conferred recently by the University of Jena, as a reward for a learned treatise of his on the subject of Civil Law. But his attainments in law and science are nothing to be compared with his wonderful knowledge of Hebrew and Greek Literature, in which he is a [sic] proficient as Dr. Campbell's letter testifies. In our church Theology he is also well read, & he is now preparing materials for a Treatise on Canon Law. I am not only desirous that the honor of Doctor of Sacred Theology be conferred on Professor Cooper on the ground of his own merit, but because it will be a graceful tribute of respect to a venerable institution, which he adorns by his learning. A Degree from Columbia College will be highly appreciated by the trustees & faculty of Rutgers College, who have conferred many honorary degrees upon Clergymen of our own Church. You know that the Dutch Reformed Body is the most conservative of all Christian Communions, & is most in harmony with our own Church, in doctrine and discipline.

I have written to Bp Potter in accordance with your suggestion, and I cannot but

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hope that with your united efforts the Degree sought & partly expected may be obtained. Relying upon your friendly offices, I remain truly yours . . .

The letter to Stubbs from Howard Crosby, a leading preacher and a temperance advocate,⁷ testified meagerly on behalf of Cooper: "My Temperance Sermon will be printed & I'll send you a copy. My knowledge of Prof. Cooper is slight, but he appeared at our Semitic Club as a true & modest scholar. I admired him much."

The letter received by the Rev. Stubbs from Dr. William H. Campbell was more enthusiastic:

I was much pleased to hear of the honor you were seeking to have conferred on Prof. Jacob Cooper of our College. He is in my judgment well worthy of it. He was graduated at Yale, & enjoys the friendship & confidence of Dr. Woolsey, who has visited him here. Prof. Cooper studied also in Europe, & his attainments are large & varied. Besides the Latin, Greek & two or three of the Modern Languages, he is & has been for twenty years a diligent and successful student of Hebrew, Arabic, and the kindred tongues.

The campaign was successful. In a letter to a fellow-trustee, Mr. Betts, Trustee Haight gave his blessing to Stubbs's efforts:

I propose to nominate two gentlemen for the Honorary Degree of S.T.D. next Monday, viz

The Rev. Jacob Cooper, D. C. L.

Professor of Greek in Rutgers College, N. J.

The Rev. William Henry Harison, an Alumnus of our College of the year 1842 and also of our Gen. Theol Seminary of the year [sic] & Rector of Grace Church Newark

If the Com. on Honors will meanwhile examine their Testimonials, they can report upon them at that meeting.

1. As to Prof. Cooper—In Rev. Dr. Stubbs letters to me you will find the whole case stated. The accompanying Testimonials are very full & satisfactory.

2. As to Mr. Harison. I have known him long & well from his character Scholarship, High Standing as a Theologian, Preacher, & Pastor, & from his position now as Rector of one of the Principal Parishes in New Jersey, & from the fact that he is one of our own *Alumni*—I not only nominate him, but would respectfully *urge* the conferring of the Degree.

In due course, Cooper and Harison were granted degrees. Ironically enough, while Cooper was considered important enough for inclusion in the *D.A.B.*, Harison was all but forgotten. The archives indicated that the latter's S.T.D. was obtained without the aid of any campaign such as that waged in Cooper's behalf. The fact that he had the support of a Trustee

⁷*D.A.B.*, Vol. 4, p. 567.

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from the very beginning and his status as an alumnus of Columbia seem to have counted heavily.

Most of the scholars and scientists honored in the 1870's were college professors. Those persons outside the academic citadels included L. D. Draper (LL.D., Wisconsin, 1872), secretary of the Wisconsin State Historical Society from 1854 to 1886,⁸ and W. C. Kerr (D.D., North Carolina, 1879), the State Geologist. Wisconsin was the only one of the five institutions to honor a practicing physician. He was Dr. Alexander Browne, M.D. and LL.D. of Scotland, a pioneer in developing scientific and humane treatment for the insane.⁹ Harvard made the only award to a diplomat, with a degree to Edward Thornton, a British Ambassador (LL.D., 1879). Lawyers fared better; Columbia honored two and each of the other four institutions had one lawyer among its recipients. College presidents held their own, receiving 10% of the doctorates at Harvard and Columbia and none from the other institutions.

No military officers were honored, though some recipients, like President Grant, were men who had served in the Army during the Civil War. No business leaders were given honorary doctorates by any of these universities; one recipient, James Lenox, was a banker and philanthropist, and a few were investors in banks or business but active primarily in other fields. In the 1860's the University of North Carolina granted an A.M. to a merchant. Kemp P. Battle writes in his history of the University: "President Swain shocked the old time men by inducing the faculty to give the degree (A.M.) to a successful merchant."¹⁰ The feeling that higher degrees were not for business men seems to have been general in this period.

The pressure to secure honorary degrees, and campaigns to convince the Columbia trustees of the desirability of granting honors to favorites, was little changed by the Civil War. A few of those honored by Columbia in the 1860-1900 period, like von Helmholtz, Lord Kelvin, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt, were men of international prominence. But the majority were men of much less importance and many were trustees, faculty members, and alumni of the University and their friends.

⁸This Society made available to the writer information about several of the honorary degree recipients of the University of Wisconsin.

⁹Information on W. A. Browne was obtained by writing the Town Clerk of Dumfries, Scotland, who in turn was able to secure the information from a granddaughter of Dr. Browne.

¹⁰Battle, Kemp P., *History of the University of North Carolina*, Vol. I, p. 781. This seems to have been the A.M. conferred on alumni, which was reserved at North Carolina for those entering the professions, teaching, ministry, etc.

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The standard of recipients was not raised by the growth of another innovation,—the mass awarding of honorary degrees as a means of celebrating some college anniversary. This practice did not decline after 1900 but flourished even more in the present century.

Harvard, at the 250th anniversary of its founding in 1886, conferred honorary degrees on 42 persons. In 1909, the inauguration of A. Lawrence Lowell as its new President was celebrated by the award of 30 honorary doctorates; and in 1936, Harvard's tercentenary provided the setting for a huge mass-conferring of 86 honorary degrees. In 1887, at the centennial anniversary of its establishment as a separate institution,¹¹ Columbia did even better than Harvard in the previous year and conferred 61 honorary degrees; in 1904, at the celebration of the founding of King's College 150 years before, 43 honorary degrees were given; and in 1929, the year of the 175th anniversary of the granting of the original charter to King's College, 134 honorary doctorates were conferred. At its 150th birthday in 1896 Princeton gave 79 honorary degrees, and Yale conferred nearly 60 honorary degrees at its two hundredth birthday in 1901.

The smaller colleges looked to these larger and older institutions as models. It was impossible because of the lack of material and intellectual resources for the small colleges to imitate the larger ones in such matters as library facilities and graduate schools. But it was easy to adopt the practice of conferring honorary degrees *en masse* to celebrate some college event.

The mass awarding of honorary degrees by the larger institutions encouraged the smaller colleges to follow suit and lowered the standards for recipients selected by both large and small institutions. At the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary celebration at Rutgers a number of the honorary degrees were bestowed on descendants of early Rutgers presidents and leaders. The citations indicate that the degrees were given, at least in part, because of the achievements of the grandfathers.¹² Honorary degrees should be "sparingly and judiciously conferred," wrote a college president concerning the policy of the small college.¹³ The relationship between the

¹¹Columbia was founded in 1754 as King's College, re-established as the nucleus of the University of the State of New York in 1784, and reorganized once more in 1787 as Columbia College. See *Columbia University Alumni Register, 1754-1931*, p. xv.

¹²*Rutgers College, the Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Its Founding as Queen's College, 1766-1916*, pp. 111-134.

¹³Hyde, William D., "The Policy of the Small College," *Educational Review*, Vol. 2, p. 317, November, 1891.

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abuse of honorary degrees and the number given was indicated in an 1866 policy report for the University of Missouri. A summary of this part of the report stated: "The general abuse of honorary degrees in the past was recognized and deplored and the recommendation made that they should be conferred exceedingly sparingly."¹⁴ When three recipients are chosen, they are much more apt to be men of high scholarly achievement than are 30. In both large and small institutions, it is much easier to slip in a few personal friends and individuals of doubtful merit when 50 or 100 are being selected.

The increase in the number of honorary degrees awarded did not meet with full approval. The post-Civil War era witnessed the birth of many new colleges and this was a factor in the increase in the number of honorary degrees conferred. The early 1870's and the years from 1888 to 1894 were periods of rapid increase in the number of new colleges. The increase in honorary degrees lagged behind the expansion in number of institutions until the 1880's when there was a phenomenal increase continuing until 1892, the peak for the period.

Probably of more importance to education than the increase in the number of institutions was the beginning and development of the modern university. Most of today's leading universities experienced a transition in the latter part of the nineteenth century from the liberal arts college with its prescribed classical curriculum and small enrollment to the modern university with its graduate and professional schools and students numbering in the thousands. Only a few institutions, such as the University of Chicago, were organized as universities from the beginning. Earned degrees were in the vanguard of the change. Often the procedure was first to set up the in-course degrees to be awarded and later to develop the university with its faculty and libraries. Graduate schools began with the faculty members already in service undertaking the guidance of a handful of graduate students. Advanced degrees were granted promptly and by some was considered as evidence of a fully developed graduate school.

This is implied in the following quotation regarding Yale, which was probably the first institution in the United States to confer a doctor's degree for graduate work. In 1860, "the department of philosophy and arts was made complete in its present shape by the establishment of the degree of Ph.D. for A.B.'s with two years' post graduate study. In 1861, this de-

¹⁴Viles, Jonas, *The University of Missouri, 1839-1939*. President Daniel Read's report on the reorganization of the university, p. 147.

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gree (Ph.D.) was taken by Eugene Schuyler, James N. Whiton, and Arthur W. Wright.”¹⁵

Between 1861 and 1872, the number of graduates taking the doctor of philosophy degree was four or less (often none) per year. Not more than eight earned doctorates were conferred in any one year before 1889. The number of courses offered was also small. In 1871, only 23 courses were available to Yale’s graduate students.¹⁶ Columbia, through its School of Mines, gave its first Ph.D. in 1875 for one year of post-graduate work. William Battle Phillips received in 1883 the first in-course doctorate (Ph.D.) conferred by the University of North Carolina.¹⁷ Harvard was probably the first American institution to develop a graduate school worthy of the name, but this development came over a period of years. Its “Graduate Department” was established¹⁸ in 1872 and the first Ph.D.’s were conferred the following year upon William Byerly and Charles Whitney, who had taken their A.B. degrees in 1871.

Soon after some colleges began to confer the Ph.D. as an in-course degree for graduate students, other colleges began to award it as an honorary degree. Harvard and Columbia, however, never granted the Ph.D. as an honorary degree. New York University granted the Ph.D. *honoris causa* as early as 1862, and between that year and 1881 gave 28 such awards.

Princeton did not wait for her graduate school to be organized before conferring this degree. It was first bestowed in 1866, 13 years before the first in-course Ph.D. was granted and was continued as an honorary degree even after earned Ph.D.’s were awarded. Honorary Ph.D.’s were given as late as 1896. During the 1866-1896 period, Princeton gave 67 honorary Ph.D.’s and only 20 earned ones. The Ph.D.’s were only a small part of the total honorary degrees (463) conferred in this period by Princeton. These included honorary A.M., D.D., LL.D., Sc.D., B.S., L.H.D., and Mus.D. Princeton’s first honorary Mus.D. was conferred in 1896, the first Litt.D. in 1892, and the first Sc.D. in 1874. Princeton probably conferred more honorary degrees in this period than any other insti-

¹⁵Steiner, Bernard C., *The History of Education in Connecticut*, p. 186. U. S. Bureau of Education, Circular of Information No. 2, 1893. Contributions to American Educational History No. 14. Edited by Herbert B. Adams.

¹⁶Farnam, Henry W., “The Graduate School,” *The Book of the Yale Pageant*, p. 145.

¹⁷Battle, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 807.

¹⁸*Harvard University Quinquennial Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates, 1636 to 1930*, p. 640.

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tution.¹⁹ The honorary Ph.D. degrees were the greatest professional assets to educators, and they received 58 of Princeton's honors of this type. The remaining nine awards went to eight clergymen and one diplomat. Most of these educators were college professors, but four were college presidents and another four were heads of preparatory schools. The majority of the recipients were alumni (58%) and lived in New Jersey or adjoining states (67%). Six of the men were on the faculty at Princeton or Princeton Seminary.

The story of Dartmouth and the Ph.D. is very similar to that of Princeton. The degree was first given in 1872 as an honorary degree to Abner J. Phipps, a teacher and alumnus of the class of 1838. Dartmouth's next honorary Ph.D.'s were granted in 1877 to Marshall Wilder, a merchant nearly 80 years of age, and two teachers, ages 39 and 41. It conferred 29 honorary Ph.D.'s in 25 years. The last Ph.D., *honoris causa*, was given in 1898 to Carroll D. Wright, a visiting lecturer in sociology and U. S. Commissioner of Labor. Just as the honorary M.D. went to the older physicians and surgeons, so the Ph.D., primarily a teaching degree, was given *honoris causa* to elderly teachers. Twenty-four of the 29 recipients of the honorary Ph.D.'s were teachers in schools and colleges, two others were college presidents and the remaining three were a lawyer, a merchant, and a writer. One of the college presidents honored was Dartmouth's own acting president. All but eight of the recipients were alumni of Dartmouth and all but nine lived in New Hampshire or bordering states.

The reports of the Commissioner of Education give a more general picture of the practice of granting both honorary and in-course Ph.D. degrees. In the 1870's, more honorary than earned Ph.D.'s were granted. In the even years, 1872, 1874, 1876, and 1878, the Reports of the Commissioner of Education list 79 honorary and 73 in-course Ph.D.'s. Both types increased in the 1880's but the honorary type had a slower growth and began to decrease in the 1890's.

What was responsible for this decline of honorary Ph.D.'s? Why did the University of Michigan in 1892, Princeton in 1896, and Dartmouth in 1897 stop giving this degree *honoris causa*? Many educators were vigorously opposed to the practice. Those who had earned the Ph.D. and those in charge of the new graduate schools which were conferring the degree in-course were fearful lest the doctorates be cheapened. Hardly had the

¹⁹General Catalogue of Princeton University, 1746-1906.

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first diplomas been awarded when this feeling came into the open. Professor Daniel C. Gilman of Yale wrote in the *Nation* in 1867²⁰ that he had observed the pressures behind the scenes to secure honorary degrees for undeserving graduates and personal friends. "The conclusion to which we have come is this, that the mode in which honorary degrees are conferred in this country is sham and a shame." He protested against the increasingly prolific bestowal of degrees and their use by college presidents to "sell their literary wares, puff their schools, and secure consideration for their neighbors." The colleges usually passed by the modest but competent scholar to select his more forward neighbor. He urged a change in the methods of conferring degrees and suggested that the lead should be taken by older colleges. "Let Harvard and Yale inaugurate a change, and the smaller college will soon follow suit." Gilman offered three ways of correcting the abuses:

First, the older and firmer colleges might refuse to give honorary doctorates under any circumstances. . . . Secondly, doctorates in law or theology might be given on examination—the candidate offering himself, like the candidates for the baccalaureate, openly and honorably, with a thesis or treatise which should exhibit his attainments. . . . Or, thirdly, a college might declare its purpose to advance its own graduates to honorary distinctions on certain recognized principles of promotion [such as the] publication of some scholarly work. . . .

If a man is made a doctor of laws, the public has a right to know whether it means he has fought a battle, or is on the right side in politics, or is the donor to the extent of five thousand dollars and upwards.

Gilman concluded with a severe condemnation of the honorary degree system because it was "full of fraud toward the public, unfairness towards men of letter, and dishonor to the name of learning and the thought of academic honor." His protest was a bombshell in academic circles and was referred to by others writing on the subject as long as 30 years afterwards. It is somewhat surprising to examine Professor Gilman's record and find that he was the recipient of nine honorary LL.D.'s after this article was written. His influence in bringing honorary degrees to a higher level would probably have been even greater if he had refused to accept these awards.

Probably the first organized protest against the conferring of the Ph.D.

²⁰"Honorary Degrees," *The Nation*, Vol. 5, p. 93, August, 1867. This article, like most of those appearing in *The Nation* at that time, was unsigned. Other writers, however, ascribed it to Gilman. The article was directed against other honorary degrees as well as the Ph.D.

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as an honorary degree was made in 1881, when the American Philological Association adopted the following resolution at its Cincinnati meeting:

Whereas, Many colleges in the United States have in recent years conferred the degree of doctor of philosophy not by examination, but *honoris causa*; be it

Resolved, That this Association deprecates the removal from the class to which it belongs (namely B.D., LL.B., M.D. and Ph.D., degrees conferred after examination), and its transfer to the class of honorary degrees.²¹

This resolution may have had a temporary effect, but it did not halt the increase in honorary degrees for long. In 1881 the U. S. Bureau of Education reported the granting of 49 honorary Ph.D.'s in the United States. The number fell to 30 in 1882 but increased to 36 the following year.

Even religious periodicals voiced disapproval of honorary Ph.D.'s. *The Independent*, after commenting in its editorial columns on the conferring of 20 honorary Ph.D.'s on professors, expressed the hope that honorary Ph.D. degrees would "soon cease to be bestowed."²²

A scholarly and influential article by Theodore D. Woolsey, president of Yale, appeared in 1884 in the *Century Magazine*.²³ Woolsey traced the European background of degrees and explained the development of honorary degrees both in Europe and in America. He gave a statistical analysis of the honorary doctorates extended by Yale and Harvard²⁴ in the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries. Woolsey's main concern was the deterioration of the higher degrees earned by graduate study in the new departments of the older colleges, caused by the prolific bestowal of identical degrees as honorary in the smaller and younger undergraduate colleges. "Many friends of sound learning are inquiring whether this conferring of the highest degrees without examination is not a cause of harm to the whole system of education, and whether it might not be better to give up altogether such degrees so conferred."

He contended that the colleges traditionally had no right to confer doctorates, either in-course or honorary; that this privilege was reserved

²¹As quoted in an article by Luken, H. T., "Honorary Degrees in the United States," *Educational Review*, June 1897, pp. 8-9.

²²*The Independent*, Vol. 34, p. 16, August 17, 1882.

²³Woolsey, Theodore D., "Academic Degrees, Especially Honorary Degrees in the United States," *Century Magazine*, Vol. 6, pp. 365-376, July, 1884.

²⁴Woolsey makes the error of stating that George Washington received Harvard's first honorary LL.D. in 1776. The first was given to John Winthrop in 1773. This error was repeated in several following articles on honorary degrees, including one as recent as 1937.

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exclusively for universities. He objected strenuously to the conferring of degrees in law or theology by colleges having only an arts faculty. Only a school with a faculty in the proposed recipient's field was capable of judging his achievements. Trustees, on the contrary, were incapable of selecting recipients for higher degrees. Moreover, when degrees become as common as the title of "Mister" or "Esquire," he declared they lost their distinction. The prevailing honorary degree system "fails of selecting the most worthy; it disappoints many . . . and gratifies a few, and those few not, of course, the best fitted to fill the place." Honorary degrees either "should be thrown aside altogether or be retained under restrictions," which would make them essentially earned degrees. Woolsey declared that "degrees given on examination and those given without examination" could not exist together—one would tend to drive out the other. He proposed to drive out those given without work by having the men "who have won honors for themselves by hard and conscientious study put the name of the institution where they earned their degrees on their printed works, let them show how and where they became learned . . . scholars and . . . the present plans of giving honors without instruction and without proof of qualification will at length give way."

Woolsey's attack on honorary degrees was widely read in academic circles and was referred to frequently in later articles on the subject. It is impossible to determine the extent of his article's influence, but it may have been more than a coincidence that the number of honorary Ph.D.'s conferred in the United States fell from 33 in 1884 to 25 in 1885, the year after the article appeared, and to 22 in 1886. However, in 1888 the number rose to 29 and in 1890 to 39.

Another attack on honorary degrees was made in an address by Charles Forster Smith, Professor of Greek at Vanderbilt University, to the National Education Association at its Nashville meeting in 1889. The address was later published and circulated by the U. S. Bureau of Education.²⁵ Smith reviewed the criticisms and recommendations made earlier by Gilman and Woolsey and presented recent statistics on honorary degrees which he had derived from the reports of the U. S. Bureau of Education. He related a number of incidents such as the following to show how the degree had been degraded.

²⁵Smith, Charles Forster, "Honorary Degrees as Conferred in American Colleges," *U. S. Bureau of Education Bulletin No. 1, 1890.*

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Springfield had got on a boom, like most other Southern towns and springs, and the public-spirited citizens determined that they needed not, as the General Court of Massachusetts in 1647, a school, but in conformity with the era of booms, a college. They were persuaded to this action by a sewing-machine agent, who proposed to be the president of the institution. One load of lumber was brought and thrown down on the lot selected for the college, and on this the board of trustees took their seats and held their first session. The only business transacted was the election of the sewing-machine agent to the degree of D.D., after which they adjourned—to meet no more, for the man with his needle left with his degree, and the college was abandoned.

There are competent witnesses still living who could testify in the case of the man who in consideration of a donation of \$10,000 to a certain college, now happily defunct, was to receive a doctorate in theology. The college performed its part, but the donation was not made. If that gentleman had only known of the institution which is said to have conferred a D.D. on the generous donor of a Webster's *Unabridged Dictionary*, he might have gone down to his grave with the coveted title, and a better name for honesty in keeping his contracts.²⁶

He noted with alarm that the practice of conferring honorary Ph.D. degrees was spreading to the small colleges all over the country.

It is a pity that the custom has not been confined to small colleges, for then it might easily be rendered ridiculous, and so checked; but when such a protest as that of the philological and scientific associations is unheeded by institutions like Princeton, Amherst, Michigan University, LaFayette, Dartmouth, Hamilton, Madison, Union, Dickinson, Western Reserve, University of Wisconsin, University of North Carolina, DePauw, University of the City of New York, all of which conferred Ph.D. as an honorary degree the year after the protest or later, it can not be hoped that the weaker institutions, West, South, or East, will seriously heed the protests of scholars.²⁷

The U. S. Bureau of Education joined in the protest against the honorary Ph.D. Not only did it circulate the Smith address, but the Bureau's own annual report for 1889-1890 denounced the awards.²⁸ This report gave the resolution of the American Philological Association of 1881 against honorary Ph.D.'s, a summary of the number of colleges giving the degree, and the total number conferred yearly from 1873 to 1889. The policy of two of the smaller colleges that had taken a strong stand against conferring the degree was recited and praised. As a remedy, it was suggested that those who had earned the Ph.D. by residence study at a respectable university make a practice of writing the name of the university after the degree as a means of discouraging the giving of honorary Ph.D.'s. The same recommendation had been made by Woolsey six years earlier.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁸*Report of the Commissioner of Education for Year 1889-1890*. Vol. II, pp. 758-759.

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More criticism appeared in the influential *Educational Review*. In September, 1892, the editors protested against using the Ph.D. as an honorary degree and threatened to publish a list of the offending colleges and recipients. Dartmouth gave only three, Princeton, four, and the University of Michigan, no Ph.D.'s after the following warning:

A number of protests have reached the *Educational Review* against the practice of many colleges in conferring the degree of Doctor of Philosophy as an honorary degree. This pernicious and demoralizing practice was more marked at the last commencement session than ever before. Scores of these degrees were given without any warrant whatever. It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that no college is justified in giving this degree at all, and no university should confer it except for advanced study and research carried on in residence. The suggestion has been made that the *Educational Review* should make a list of the colleges that persist in this abuse and publish it from time to time. It might be more efficacious to print a list of the persons who receive and accept such a degree.²⁹

Brown and Rutgers were criticized in the editorial columns of this magazine in 1893 for giving the Doctor of Philosophy *honoris causa*.³⁰ Effective protests against honorary degrees, and honorary Ph.D.'s in particular, increased rapidly. In December, 1896, Professor H. T. Lukens of Bryn Mawr College presented a very able report to the Annual Convention of Graduate Clubs in which he summarized the protests made in preceding years against the use of honorary Ph.D.'s. This report was instrumental in securing the adoption of several vigorous resolutions against certain practices then in vogue. Lukens reviewed the Gilman and Woolsey articles, the resolution adopted by the American Philological Association in 1881, the protest made by Prof. C. F. Smith before the National Education Association in 1889, the comments of the Commissioner of Education in his report for 1889-90, the efforts of the *Educational Review*, and the resolution passed by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1894. He reported that the colleges of New York state were giving about one-fourth of all the honorary Ph.D.'s granted in the United States and had been among the worst offenders; in the same year the state Board of Regents adopted measures prohibiting the conferring of the A.B. or Ph.D. *honoris causa*. Lukens urged immediate action:

The present is an opportune time to act in this matter. The vast majority of people concerned in higher education all over the country are heartily in favor of the protection of college degrees. In response to a circular of inquiry in regard to the

²⁹*Educational Review*, Vol. 4, p. 208. September, 1892.

³⁰*Educational Review*, Vol. 6, pp. 200-201, September, 1893.

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granting of honorary degrees, out of a hundred colleges answering the circular, only eleven failed to oppose most emphatically the honorary Ph.D. They say the practice is a farce. . . . The reasons given as grounds for the bestowal of honor are remarkable for their indefiniteness. . . . A New York college has been giving it to "skilled teachers." A leading Pennsylvania institution bestows it for "eminent attainments."³¹

This report was an important factor in securing the adoption of the following resolutions by the Convention of Graduate Clubs:

Resolved, That it is the sense of this convention:

1. That it is inexpedient for any institution to give the same degrees *honoris causa* as it grants in regular course on examination.
2. That in every case the reason for bestowing an honorary degree should be openly avowed, and should be stated in the programme of the commencement exercises and in the annual catalogue.
3. That bachelor degrees are inappropriate as honorary degrees or *ex gratia*, and should be made to signify always the completion of a recognized grade of undergraduate work in their respective departments.
4. That the master's degree should never be granted except for resident graduate study of at least one year's duration, tested by adequate examination.
5. That the minimum requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy shall be as follows: (a) The previous attainment of a bachelor's degree or its equivalent; (b) the completion of at least two years of resident graduate study, not more than one year, however, to be required in residence at the institution conferring the degree; (c) adequate examinations and a thesis embodying the results of original research; such thesis should bear the written acceptance of the professor or department in charge of the major subject, and should be accompanied by a short biography of the candidate.
6. That the degrees of Ph.D., Sc.D., M.D., and D.Sc. should never be given *honoris causa* nor *in absentia*. L.H.D., S.T.D., D.D., LL.D., D.C.L., and Mus.D. are recognized as honorary degrees.

The following recommendation was referred to the organization's board of editors:

That the Editor-in-Chief of *Graduate Courses* should be directed to publish each year in the *Handbook* a list of all recipients of honorary degrees from the institutions represented in the *Handbook*, together with the grounds on which such degrees were granted; likewise to publish a list of all the recipients of regular Ph.D. degrees, together with the titles of their theses and the names of the professors approving them.

However, the following resolutions failed to pass in the form in which they were presented:

That it is unbecoming for an institution to grant honorary degrees to any of its

³¹Lukens, H. T., "Honorary Degrees in the United States," *Educational Review*, Vol. 14, pp. 9-16. June, 1897.

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own members, whether students, faculty, or trustees, or to anyone whatever who applies for them.

That no institution should confer a degree of a higher grade than the degrees to which the facilities of study offered by it directly lead.³²

The actions of the Convention of Graduate Clubs won the hearty support of the editors of the *Educational Review*. In September, 1897, they began to carry out their earlier threat by publishing lists of offending colleges and the recipients of honorary Ph.D.'s.³³ The issue of that date contained the following comment:

It is an instructive and discouraging commentary on the paper by Dr. Lukens, printed in this *Review* for June last, that the newspapers recorded the following instances of the degree of Ph.D. being conferred *causa honoris*, in utter defiance of educational sentiment and conviction, at the last commencement season of 1897:

Hamilton College: Archibald C. McLachlan, Jamaica, N. Y.

St. John's College, Fordham: James H. Walsh.

Dartmouth College: Carroll D. Wright, Washington, D. C.

Union College: James E. Benedict, Washington, D. C., and Franklin H. Giddings, Columbia University.

Up to this time no one of the gentlemen has publicly declined the degree, as did Librarian W. E. Foster of Providence a few years ago; but it is to be hoped that they will hesitate to add it to their names or to make any use of it.³⁴

This method of showing disapproval of honorary Ph.D.'s was very effective. The undesirable publicity probably helped Dartmouth decide that it would give no more honorary Ph.D.'s. Moreover, some of the recipients became uncomfortable. Columbia's Professor Franklin H. Giddings, for example, probably found it embarrassing to have his name broadcast as one who had secured a Ph.D. in a manner condemned by his colleagues. These recipients had accepted the honorary Ph.D. because it was expected to give prestige in academic circles. It must have been a severe blow to have their names held up before their colleagues for scorn instead of praise.

The year 1897 marked the end of the honorary Ph.D. degree threat to the rapidly growing graduate schools of the large universities. Indeed, the U. S. Office of Education reports indicate that opposition to honorary degrees began to show its effect after 1890. In that year, 39 honorary Ph.D.'s were reported, a higher figure than for any even year previous to or following that time. In 1894, the number was 33, but it fell to 15 in 1898. Only nine individuals received honorary Ph.D.'s in 1902 and eight years later

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

³³*Educational Review*, Vol. 16, September, 1898; Vol. 18, September, 1899; Vol. 32, p. 216, September, 1906.

³⁴*Educational Review*, Vol. 14, p. 190, September, 1897.

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the number fell to two. By 1910 it had become firmly established in academic circles that it was unseemly to confer the Ph.D. as an honorary degree.

However, a few of the smaller colleges were daring or remote enough to brave criticism.³⁵ But even they could not escape ridicule. The case of one small institution of questionable higher learning was handled by the *Educational Review* as follows:

The Association of American Universities and other bodies that concern themselves with the standards for the degree of Ph.D. have overlooked the herculean efforts of one valuable coadjutor. This is no less an institution than the world-famous Arkansas Normal College at Jamestown, Ark., a community of 130 inhabitants, which college sheds its genial rays in many directions and over considerable distances. The Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1899-1900 tells us that the Arkansas Normal College at Jamestown—which is by no means to be confused with the Arkansas Normal School at Sulphur Rock—has three male and three female teachers; 60 male and 58 female students; no graduating class in 1899-1900; no children in the model school (which deficiency is made up for by having 38 weeks in the school year); no volumes in its library; \$5000 worth of grounds, buildings, furniture, and scientific apparatus; no income reported for 1899-1900; and no benefactions received in that year.

The president of the Arkansas Normal College at Jamestown is J. L. Graham, A.B., Ph.D., D.C.L. He announces that his institution is "A normal school for the masses (118 of whom had arrived in 1899-1900): thoro, practical, moral, religious, and non-sectarian." We feared that the Arkansas Normal College was "religious" and fancied that it was also "moral," when we read the following letter, written under date of March 3, 1902.

"My Dear Sir:

"If you are interested in the honorary doctorate of Ph.D., I shall be pleased to correspond with you regarding the same.

"The Arkansas Normal College was chartered in 1895 and since that time has gained considerable reputation as one of the leading normal colleges in the southwest but being young has not yet secured a very large Alumni Association therefore we have decided to confer a few honorary degrees on men of prominence as yourself in order to increase our Alumni and thus further extend our influence and usefulness.

"The membership fee in our Alumni Association is \$25 and should you decide that you would like to become a member of this association you will please write me by return mail giving a brief history of your scholastic and professional work.

"I hope to hear from you immediately as the number on whom we expect to confer honorary degrees is limited and I desire to complete the list as early as possible.

"Hoping to hear from you by return mail, I am,

"Yours very truly,

"J. L. GRAHAM, Pres.

³⁵The Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute conferred four honorary Ph.D.'s in 1924, one of which was taken by the President of Yale. Ricketts, Palmer C. *History of Rensselaer Institute, 1824-1934*. Appendix VI.

OPPOSITION TO THE HONORARY PH. D.

What first attracted our attention to this letter was the fact that the fee for membership in the Alumni Association of Arkansas Normal College was considerably more than that established by the Alumni Associations of Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, Cornell, Chicago, and other institutions that may be said to be competitors of Arkansas Normal College. But no doubt the advantages and associations that follow from membership in the Alumni Association of the Arkansas Normal College justify a rather higher membership fee than is usual elsewhere.

We ought in fairness to add that President Graham, A.B., Ph.D., D.C.L., believes Jamestown, Ark., to be one of the healthiest towns in the State, and that it is on the south side of White River, six miles from Batesville.³⁶

The practice of awarding Ph.D.'s as honorary degrees seems never to have stopped completely—although it has seldom been in evidence in recent years. As late as 1937, Bing Crosby of Hollywood "crooning" fame had an honorary Ph.D. bestowed upon him by a small Western college.

³⁶Editorial, *Educational Review*, Vol. 23, pp. 429-30, April, 1902.



"Sometimes I wish they'd never given you that honorary degree."

Tom Holloway in *Collier's*, July 29, 1939. Reprinted by special permission.

CHAPTER IV

Influences of a Business Era (1900-1928)

Higher education grew rapidly in the United States after 1900. The financial backing for this expansion came largely from two sources. Taxes which the people levied upon themselves made possible the development of great state universities; and private contributions from men of wealth were largely responsible for the growth of the large private universities. John D. Rockefeller's gifts resulted in the establishment of the modern University of Chicago. Johns Hopkins University became the country's first graduate school through the benefactions of the Baltimore merchant whose name the institution bears. Harvard under the guiding influence of Charles W. Eliot and Columbia under Seth Low and Nicholas Murray Butler were transformed from small liberal arts colleges into great graduate universities. The number of colleges and universities, not including teachers' colleges, normal schools, or junior colleges, increased from 443 in 1904 to 828 in 1928,¹ while in the same period the enrollment soared from one quarter of a million to nearly one million students.

The number of institutions conferring in-course Ph.D. degrees remained small; there were 37 in 1900, 44 in 1920, and only 69 in 1928. But the total number of earned doctorates conferred bounded upward from less than 400 in 1900 to nearly 2,000 in 1928. Most of this increase occurred after 1920.

The seven institutions treated in detail in this study—Harvard and Co-

¹U. S. Office of Education Reports.

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lumbia Universities, the Universities of North Carolina, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and California, and Smith College—grew rapidly after 1900. The University of California, with a 1930 enrollment of nearly 20,000 and a graduate department of over 2,000, was the largest of the group. Its enrollment was 145 in 1880 and 771 in 1900. Columbia sponsored the largest graduate department—over 3,000 in 1930 as compared with less than 100 in 1890. Harvard, Columbia, and North Carolina experienced their greatest growth in both graduate departments and total enrollment in the 1920 decade. The golden period of expansion for Wisconsin, Nebraska, and California was the 1910-1920 period.

The number of honorary degrees given also increased, but the increase was much smaller than that of enrollment or of in-course doctorates. The number of degrees, *honoris causa*, for the entire country rose from 350 in 1872 to 745 in 1890. In the period 1890-1920, the number of honorary degrees conferred remained fairly constant at about 800 annually. The number granted in 1918 was 736, lower by nine than the number of honorary degrees conferred 28 years earlier. However, there was a steady increase from 1918 to 1930, with a total of 1,347 awards for the period. The number given in each succeeding biennium was more than the preceding one.² The number of in-course academic doctorates surpassed the number of honorary degrees for the first time in 1922 and ten years later, 1932, more than twice as many earned Ph.D.'s were awarded as honorary degrees of all types. Table 1 shows the number of honorary degrees given by the seven institutions in the periods studied.

TABLE I
NUMBER OF HONORARY DOCTORATES CONFERRED BY SEVEN
INSTITUTIONS*

	Harvard University [1636]	Columbia University [1754]	University of North Carolina [1795]	University of Wisconsin [1848]	University of Nebraska [1871]	University of California [1868]	Smith College [1875]
Before 1787	25	2					
1830-1839	42	46	11				
1870-1879	41	48	20	7	2	0	0
1907-1916	113	82	32	24	13	29	17
1919-1928	85	83	45	41	27	46	22

*Dates in brackets indicate year of origin of each institution.

²Based on *U. S. Office of Education Biennial Reports* which are complete only for the academic years ending in even numbers.

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The percentage of colleges and universities in the United States conferring honorary degrees during a given year has varied little. In 1872, 31.5% of the colleges and universities awarded one or more; in 1936, 31.4%, with a high of 42% and a low of 31% for the period 1872-1936. About 60% to 70% of the colleges and universities in a given year did not grant degrees *honoris causa*.

The publicly controlled colleges and universities have given fewer honorary degrees, comparatively, than private institutions. From 1918 to 1936, the percentage of public colleges conferring honorary degrees in a given even year varied from 29% to 36%, while the range for privately controlled institutions was from 31% to 42%. Of those universities dispensing honorary degrees for a ten-year period, the public institutions gave an average of 355 awards per hundred institutions, while the private colleges gave 408. However, the private institutions with smaller enrollments awarded several times as many honorary degrees per thousand students enrolled as did the public universities.

Nearly 200 varieties of honorary degrees were given to some 50,000 recipients from 1870 to 1939 in the entire United States.³ In 1900 alone, 20 different honorary degrees were reported to the Office of Education, and in 1928 46 varieties were conferred. Creative ability in evolving new names for honorary degrees produced such specimens as Doctor of Diplomacy, Master of Public Service, Bachelor of Science in Secretarial Studies, and Associate Doctor of Science in Osteopathy. The degree of Doctor of Fortitude and Faith (D.F.F.) was conferred in 1939 on Admiral Richard E. Byrd by a Pennsylvania institution. The honorary degree of Doctor of Canine Fidelity was granted to Bonzo, a seeing-eye German shepherd dog, by the alumni of a New Jersey Institution in the same year.⁴ The number of different types of honorary degrees in the 15 even years after 1900 was much greater than in the 15 even years following 1870.

An outstanding change after 1900 was the increase of honorary doctorates and the decline of masters' and bachelors' degrees. In 1892 the M.A. surpassed all honorary degrees, even D.D.'s, in popularity; but in

³In the even years from 1872 to 1936, the colleges and universities of the United States reported to the U. S. Office of Education the conferring of 127 different kinds of honorary degrees, 58 of which were reported for one year only. Thus, if the odd years produced an equal number of varieties that lasted only one season, the total number of varieties would have been 186. In the even years, 1872 to 1936 inclusive, 26,178 honorary degrees were reported. In the odd years, a similar number was probably conferred to make the total at least 50,000.

⁴*New York Herald Tribune*, June 10, 1939.

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1936 less than eight per cent of all the honorary degrees were masters, and since 1900 only 13% have been of this type. Eighty-eight per cent of all the various types of honorary masters' degrees since 1872 have been M.A.'s and seven per cent M.S.'s. These two varieties accounted for 95% while 41 other varieties made up the remaining five per cent. Masters' degrees, according to a study made by the American Association of University Professors in 1917,⁵ were given to persons in a wider variety of fields and to persons of less achievement than were the LL.D., Sc.D. or Litt.D. The same study revealed that all but five of more than 500 recipients of these three types of doctorates were listed in the British or American *Who's Who* volumes, but 17 of the 44 recipients of M.A.'s were too obscure to be included. Only 39 of a total of 89 awarded D.D.'s appeared in *Who's Who*.

Although bachelors' degrees are not recognized as "proper" honorary degrees, 23 different varieties have been conferred since 1872; these have been noted in each biennial report of the U. S. Office of Education. As late as 1936 a bachelor of arts degree was awarded as an honorary distinction. Over 200 B.A.'s *honoris causa* and over 50 honorary B.S. degrees were conferred in the even years since 1872.

Of the 33 varieties of earned doctorates given between 1872 and 1930, 19 were conferred as honorary degrees. Ten of the 14 earned doctorates not duplicated as honorary degrees were given so infrequently that they appeared in only one of the annual reports of the U. S. Office of Education. These ten included such rare specimens as Doctor of Aeronautical Engineering, Doctor of Canon Law, Doctor of Sanitary Engineering, and Doctor of Social Work. The popular earned degrees—B.A., B.S., LL.B., B.D., M.A., M.S., Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., and Th.D.—were all conferred as honorary degrees. Even the Doctor of Medicine degree (M.D.) was extended, *honoris causa*, as recently as 1934; it was given as an honorary degree in more than half of the 32 bienniums from 1872 to 1934. On the other hand, the common honorary degrees—D.D., LL.D., and Litt.D.—were given on a few occasions as in-course degrees. The honorary and earned degree systems have become so inter-woven and over-lapping that it would be impossible to be absolutely sure that the degree of any individual was earned without consulting a transcript of his college record.

In general, the seven selected institutions followed the trend of all the colleges and universities reporting to the U. S. Office of Education. The

⁵*Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, Vol. III, No. 8, p. 15.

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divinity degrees decreased more rapidly at the seven institutions after 1900 than in the larger group. The new degrees of Litt.D. and Sc.D. compensated for the decline. These four doctorates—LL.D., Litt.D., Sc.D., and D.D.—were given after 1900 to over 90% of all recipients of both groups. The decline of the D.D. and S.T.D. degrees in the first quarter of the twentieth century reflects a decline of the influence of clergymen and religion in higher education. At Columbia University and the University of North Carolina only about one-tenth of the awards were degrees in theology or divinity in the decades between 1907 and 1928, while in the earlier period, 1870-79, the ratios were from one-half to four-fifths of all honorary doctorates conferred. Both Columbia and North Carolina, however, gave a slightly higher proportion of their honorary doctorates to clergymen in the 1919-28 period than in the 1907-16 decade. Harvard conferred less than 14% of its doctorates as S.T.D.'s in the three periods, 1870-79, 1907-16, and 1919-28. Only about one-third to one-half in each period were given to working pastors; the others went to professors of theology. The Universities of Wisconsin, Nebraska, California, and Smith College conferred no D.D.'s or S.T.D.'s in any of the periods studied. Wisconsin and California each gave LL.D.'s to two clergymen in the 1907-16 decade, and Nebraska, it will be recalled, granted an LL.D. to a bishop in the 1870's. For all the universities and colleges in the United States the D.D., in spite of its decline, maintained the first position among the types of honorary doctorates conferred until 1928, when it was surpassed in popularity by the LL.D.

The LL.D. has been granted to individuals in all fields and for many types of achievement. Clergymen and generals, aviators and scholars, bankers and sportsmen have been made doctors of laws. A committee of the American Association of University Professors in 1917 made an analysis of 477 LL.D.'s given by 37 institutions and reached these conclusions:

First, there is unconscious agreement in America and England that this [the LL.D.] is the suitable recognition of eminence or success in public life or administration. In the American lists no less than 85 per cent of the total is contributed by public men, administrators, ecclesiastics, physicians and surgeons; scholars and investigators form but 8.06 per cent. Seeing that this degree is generally esteemed the highest *academic* honor, these figures indicate some lurking defect in methods of selection.⁶

The Doctor of Laws has been Harvard's most frequently conferred

⁶*Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, Vol. III, No. 8, p. 15.

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honor in every period studied. In the 1907-16 period, the LL.D. was given to slightly more than two-fifths of the recipients, but in the post-World War I decade, it was granted to nearly two-thirds of all those honored. Ever since 1901 the University of California has limited honorary awards to the LL.D. Several universities have followed California's example and now use this degree exclusively in honorary cases. This practice, if made universal, would make it possible to distinguish more clearly between earned and honorary degrees.

The degrees of Doctor of Science and Doctor of Letters have come to be considered as rewards for scholarly work in a much more narrow sense than the all-inclusive LL.D. The Sc.D. is usually given only to those who have made intellectual contributions to the physical sciences, while the Litt.D. is, for the most part, conferred only on scholars in the other academic fields. The 1917 study of the American Association of University Professors found that in 37 leading institutions, both the Sc.D. and the Litt.D. were given almost entirely to scholars and investigators. Of the 89 Litt.D.'s considered, 71 were given to scholars and investigators, 12 to public men and administrators, three to artists, two to journalists, and one to a physician. Of the 83 Sc.D.'s, 64 were granted to investigators, ten to physicians and surgeons, six to technicians, and two to architects.⁷ The first honorary Sc.D. was reported in 1884 and the first honorary Litt.D. in 1892. In 1910, 26 Sc.D.'s and 40 Litt.D.'s were reported to the U. S. Office of Education. In 1930, the totals were 148 and 138 respectively; and in 1936, 141 Sc.D.'s and 11 Litt.D.'s were conferred. The Litt.D. is very rarely awarded as an in-course degree; only six have been reported since 1872 and none since 1926. On the other hand, the Sc.D. as an earned degree has increased in popularity since 1920 (7 granted in 1920, 47 in 1930). The only in-course doctorates, exclusive of medical and dental degrees, conferred on more persons than the Sc.D. in 1930 were the Ph.D. and the J.D.

At most of the seven selected institutions, the Sc.D. and the Litt.D. have been most frequently used as honorary awards in the twentieth century. At Harvard and Columbia, their most popular period was the pre-war decade when, combined, they made up 41% of Harvard's and 49% of Columbia's honorary doctorates. At the Universities of North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Nebraska, the Sc.D. and Litt.D. were more frequently given in the post-war decade. North Carolina and Nebraska did not confer these degrees

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 16. One degree was not accounted for.

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before World War I. In the 1919-28 period, the Sc.D. at Wisconsin was given to more recipients than the LL.D.

The University of Nebraska, which granted seven different types of honorary doctorates in the 1919-28 period, gave more varieties than any of the other six institutions in any of the periods studied. Nineteen per cent of Nebraska's honors were Doctor of Engineering degrees, 15% each were Doctor of Fine Arts and Doctor of Agriculture, and 4% were Doctor of Music. The remainders were LL.D.'s and Litt.D.'s. This conferring of a variety of degrees represents a trend, carried even further by some institutions, toward making the degree indicate the profession or achievement of the recipient. One of the results of this trend is to add even more confusion to the process of making distinctions between earned and honorary degrees. In 1922 the University of North Carolina conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Pharmacy on Edward V. Zoeller, the Chairman of the State Board of Pharmacy; and in 1928 it gave the Degree of Doctor of Engineering to John F. Stevens, who had been one of the chief engineers in the construction of the Panama Canal. The trend at Smith College, where most of the recipients were women, was to grant more L.H.D.'s (Doctor of Humane Letters). This degree increased in popularity from 23% in 1907-16 to 45% in the post-war decade.

The only honorary M.D.⁸ of the seven institutions after 1900 was given by Harvard in 1909 when it conferred this degree and an LL.D. on its retiring president, Charles Eliot. This was the only instance found in which any university gave two honorary degrees at the same time to the same person.

The Doctor of Education degree, Ed.D., given only as an earned degree at Harvard and Columbia, appeared more frequently in the 1920's and 1930's both as an honorary and in-course degree. It was first included in the U. S. Office of Education reports for 1922, when eight in-course and three honorary Ed.D.'s were granted. Harvard gave its first earned Ed.D.'s in 1921 to a class of eight; it was evidently the first graduate institution to give this degree. In 1930, 22 earned and seven honorary Ed.D.'s were conferred in the United States. The Doctor of Education has supplanted the Doctor of Pedagogy (Ped.D.) as an in-course degree although the latter is still holding its own as an honorary degree. The New York State Department of Education now recognizes the Ped.D. solely as an honorary award and the Ed.D. only as an in-course degree. The first earned Ped.D.'s

⁸See Chapter II for further discussion of honorary M.D.'s.

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were reported by the U. S. Office of Education in 1892 and the first honorary one in 1900. No in-course Ped.D.'s have been reported since 1924, but honorary Ped.D.'s were conferred in increasing numbers during the 1920's.

Harvard in 1916 bestowed the only Doctor of Arts degree given by the seven institutions. The University of Nebraska, which had given five honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees (D.F.A.) previous to 1937 (the first in 1914), was one of the few colleges in America to award this degree.

The Doctor of Music Degree (Mus.D.) appeared among the honorary degrees in the earliest reports of the U. S. Office of Education. Eight were reported in 1912, the peak year before 1920. Six honorary Mus. D.'s were conferred in 1920 and the number increased to 32 in 1934, then dropped to 19 in 1936. Because this degree goes only to persons within a narrow field of specialization, the number is of course low. Only two of the seven selected institutions, Columbia and Nebraska, have bestowed this degree.

The prolific variety of the types of honorary degrees is largely the result of an attempt to make the degree explain the reason for the award. Such attempts would be more useful if clearer distinctions were made. The average person is unfamiliar with different types of degrees and more often than not assumes that an abbreviated honorary doctorate is an earned one.

Who were the persons called to receive the highest honors of the seven selected institutions? Facts with regard to age, educational background, sex, political and religious affiliation, and occupation of recipients shed much light on this question. Studies of other social groups, such as boards of education, make it possible to compare the occupational distribution with the group given honorary doctorates.

The age trend, in more recent periods, has been to honor older men. Columbia University, which began as King's College in 1754, gave two doctorates⁹ before 1776 to men who were 45 and 46 years of age. The median age of recipients dropped to 38 years in the 1830's, but it has since increased steadily. In the 1870's, the median age was 50 years; in the 1907-16 period, 56 years; and in the 1919-28 period, 60 years. The range in the last named period was from 44 to 99 years. The youngest of the group was Albert, King of the Belgians, and the oldest was Dr. Stephen Smith, Professor of Medicine and first president of the American Public Health Association. The increase of the life span and the longer prepara-

⁹Excludes seven *ad eundem* degrees. If these are included the median age of the nine men would be 41 years.

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tion required for the professions probably influenced the trend toward a higher median age.

Harvard has quite consistently given its honors to older men. In the 1870's, the median age was 55; in the 1907-16 decade, 58; and in the post-war decade, the median rose to 61 years. The University of North Carolina likewise honored younger men before the Civil War and older men in the later periods. All of the seven institutions except the University of California gave more honors to older men in the 1919-28 decade than in the pre-war period. The median age of the Nebraska recipients, for example, increased from 49 to 59 years. The University of California, the one exception, showed a decline from the unusually high level of 68 years in the 1907-16 period to 62 years in the 1919-28 period. This marked tendency to honor individuals in their sixties may perhaps be explained by the fact that the university gave only a few honorary degrees before 1901; consequently, it gave many degrees in the following decade to men who otherwise might have been honored earlier.

From 10% to 22% of the recipients of the awards of each of these seven institutions in the post-war decade were beyond their allotted "threescore and ten years" when they received their honorary degrees, and from 36% to 60% were past the 60-year mark, a figure above the average life expectation for an American-born male.¹⁰

In all the periods studied, only two of the seven institutions gave honorary doctorates to men under 30. Harvard, as mentioned earlier, honored General Lafayette in 1784 when he was 27. The University of Wisconsin in 1928 awarded an LL.D. to a youth of 26 who piloted an airplane from New York to Paris—Charles A. Lindbergh. Of over 900 doctorates given by the seven universities in all the periods surveyed, less than 60 went to men under 40. A large proportion of those honored at more advanced ages may well have made their contributions before the age of 40, but the honors came after time had tested their achievements.

The median age of those who received honorary doctorates from the seven institutions in the 1919-28 period was 60 years (60.0). How does this compare with the age of other social groups? In *Who's Who in America* (1928-29 issue), the median age of new admissions was 51.2 years,¹¹ nearly nine years younger than the age of the honorary doctors.

¹⁰For the years 1929-31 the complete expectation of life at birth was 59.12 for white males. *The World Almanac*, 1940, p. 479.

¹¹*Who's Who in America*, 1932-33, Vol. 17, p. 24. Some 3931 persons were admitted to *Who's Who* in the two-year period, while about 2500 honorary degrees were given in the U. S. in two years.

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Professor George S. Counts' survey of boards of education,¹² made between 1920, and 1926, found the median age of 261 members of 44 college and university boards to be 53.8 years, over six years less than that of honorary degree recipients. His survey included a comparison of the median age of the 96 members of the U. S. Senate, 400 members of the House of Representatives, and the nine members of the U. S. Supreme Court for the year 1926. Only the Supreme Court Justices, whose median age was 66 years, were an older group than the honorary degree recipients of this period. The median age of Senators was 59.3 years, a few months less than the 60-year median of the honorary doctors, while that of Congressmen was considerably lower, 54.3 years.¹³

Few women, old or young, have received honorary degrees even though they have constituted one-half of our population and, in the past century, have made considerable progress in their struggle towards social equality with men. They have come in increasingly larger and larger numbers to institutions of higher learning. By 1900, over one-third of all college students in the country were women.¹⁴ In that year, six per cent of all the earned Ph.D. degrees went to women. By 1910, women received 11% of the in-course Ph.D.'s, and by 1920, 17%.¹⁵

While those in charge of institutions of higher learning have been willing to admit women to their graduate schools in ever-increasing numbers, they have been very reluctant to recognize the achievements of women by granting them honorary doctorates. In the three periods prior to 1880, not one woman received an honorary doctorate from the seven selected institutions. Harvard did not grant any of its honorary doctorates to women even in the 1919-28 period when they were allowed to work for higher in-course degrees. Radcliffe College, an affiliated institution for women, has never conferred honorary degrees. Columbia honored three women in the 1907-16 period and four in the post-war decade. North Carolina and Wisconsin made no awards to women in the periods studied¹⁶ until the 1919-28 decade, when each granted honorary doctorates to three. The University of Nebraska first gave honorary degrees to women in 1917, when it awarded LL.D.'s to Willa Cather and Edith Abbott. In the 1919-28 period, Nebraska made only one award to a woman. The University of

¹²Counts, George S., *The Social Composition of Boards of Education*, p. 36.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁴Judd, C. H., "Education," *Recent Social Trends in the United States*, p. 342.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 343.

¹⁶However, the University of North Carolina gave an LL.D. to Mrs. Cornelia P. Spencer in 1895.

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California honored two women in the same decade—Aurelia H. Reinhardt, president of Mills College, and Susan M. Dorsey, superintendent of the Los Angeles public schools.

Most of the women honored were writers and educators. The author, Willa Cather, was honored by three of the seven institutions—Columbia and Smith, as well as the University of Nebraska. The University of Wisconsin gave Litt.D.'s in 1927 to two outstanding women of the stage, Maude Adams and Minnie Madden Fiske; and in 1926 it gave an Litt.D. to Louise P. Kellogg, historian of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. North Carolina honored two writers and the president of a women's college in the 1919-28 period.

Smith College gave 82% of its honorary doctorates to women in both the 1907-16 and 1919-28 periods. Most of the recipients were college presidents, professors, or social and welfare workers. Among the outstanding women honored were Julia Ward Howe, reformer and writer (LL.D., 1910); Jane Addams, famous head of Chicago's Hull House (LL.D., 1910); and Marie Curie, the discoverer of radium (Sc.D., 1921; also Columbia, 1921).

Excluding Smith, the six remaining institutions, combined, conferred only one per cent of their honorary doctorates upon women in the 1907-16 decade, and increased their share to four per cent in the 1919-28 period. In contrast seven per cent of the biographies in the 1920-21 volume of *Who's Who* covered women. Even boards of trustees of colleges and universities included a higher percentage (8%) of women.¹⁷

After 1900, women began to be recognized by the honorary degree committees of universities and colleges, especially in the period following World War I. Their gains, however, outside of the colleges exclusively for women, were less than in other fields, such as inclusion in *Who's Who*, membership on boards of trustees, and entrance to graduate schools.

If those who received honorary doctorates from the seven institutions under consideration are divided into two categories, those with and without an earned bachelor's degree or its equivalent, the results show that those with degrees received 82% of all the honorary doctorates which these institutions conferred in the 1919-28 period. Seventy-four per cent of the recipients in the period before 1787 were college graduates, 80% in the 1830's, 78% in the 1870's, and 81% in the 1907-16 period.

One would expect the data to show an increase in the proportion,

¹⁷Counts, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

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especially since 1870, because of the tremendous increase in the relative number of college graduates. The total population of the United States has almost quadrupled while the total enrollment in colleges and universities has risen more than twenty-fold (1870-1930).¹⁸

However, the admiration that the public shows for the "self-educated" man who has made good without the aid of higher education is reflected in the persisting tendency to honor non-college men. It may also be a tribute to the energy of those who lack in-course degrees in seeking honors as a way of compensating for this deficiency.

In the 1919-28 period, the University of Nebraska gave 11% of its honors to individuals without earned college degrees, the lowest percentage of any of the seven institutions. In contrast, the University of North Carolina gave the highest percentage (27%) to non-college individuals.

Men without an earned doctorate may enjoy with an honorary one what is in effect the same status. They are able to use the title "Doctor" and may be so addressed. But in most cases, a person with an earned doctorate has comparatively little to gain by receiving an honorary doctorate.

Less than one-fourth of all the individuals receiving honorary doctorates from the seven institutions studied in the post-war decade had in-course doctorates. The University of Wisconsin and the University of California ranked first among the seven, with 60% and 40%, respectively, of their honorary degree recipients having earned doctorates. The two institutions with the lowest percentage of earned doctorates relative to honorary doctorates were the University of North Carolina (11%) and Columbia (15%). Harvard, Columbia, and North Carolina actually gave a smaller proportion of their honors to men without doctorates in the period 1919-28 than they did in the preceding decade, even though the number of earned doctorates has been increasing steadily each year since 1884.

How does the formal education of the recipients of honorary doctorates of these seven institutions compare with that of the groups included in *Who's Who in America*? Among those selected for *Who's Who* are athletes, actors, and leaders of the higher civil, military, and naval positions. One might therefore expect the formal education of this mixed group to be more limited than that of the group selected by the leading universities for their highest "academic" awards. However, of nearly 27,000 persons

¹⁸U. S. Census and U. S. Office of Education reports.

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in the 1928-29 edition of *Who's Who*,¹⁹ 25.44% had earned doctorates, while only 24.24% of the recipients of honorary doctorates had gone equally far in their formal education. The general *Who's Who* population also had a higher ratio of persons whose highest in-course degree was the master's (17.38% for *Who's Who*, 15.06% for the recipients of honorary doctorates). The honorary doctor's group, however, had a smaller proportion of persons without any college degrees (19.29%) than the *Who's Who* group (26.37%).

A recent study of the degrees held by presidents of four-year colleges, made by Professor Luther E. Warren,²⁰ revealed that the presidents without in-course doctorates received more honorary degrees than those with earned doctorates. Nearly two-thirds of those whose highest degree was a bachelor's had received honorary degrees; half of those with master's degrees had been honored; but only one-third of those with earned doctorates had been awarded honorary doctorates. There is probably little relationship between scholarship and the receiving of degrees *honoris causa* by college presidents. It seems a fair conclusion that honorary degrees are given to presidents without earned doctorates to cover up their academic deficiencies.

A comparison of earned degrees with the honorary doctorates of 150 full professors associated with Columbia, Harvard, and the University of North Carolina revealed a situation somewhat similar to that of college presidents. Fifty full professors were selected at random from each institution. The annual catalogues for 1924-25 were the source of information. All M.A.'s were counted as earned degrees, but some may have been honorary, since the honorary degrees were not labeled as such in the catalogues. Of the 101 who had earned doctorates (chiefly Ph.D.'s), less than 20% were given honorary doctorates; but 35% of the 49 professors without earned doctorates had received honorary ones. Unlike the college presidents covered by Warren's study, the professors with earned master's degrees received a larger share of honorary doctorates than those with bachelor's degrees alone. Forty-three per cent of the professors with in-course master's were rated high enough in scholarly achievements to merit honorary degrees, but only 25% of those with bachelor's degrees had doc-

¹⁹ *Who's Who in America, 1938-39*, Vol. 20, p. 20. This volume compares the formal education of the persons covered with those in the 1928-29 issue. The latter volume contains the sketches of 28,805 persons, of whom 26,996 furnished enough information to be included in the tabulation of formal education.

²⁰ Warren, Luther E., "A Study of the Presidents of Four-Year Colleges in the United States," *Education*, March, 1938, pp. 427-8.

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torates bestowed upon them *honoris causa*. Only one professor lacked even a bachelor's degree and he was overlooked by all the honorary degree selecting committees.

Separate tabulations for Harvard, Columbia, and North Carolina revealed that in each institution the professors with earned doctorates had fewer honorary degrees per capita than the group without. Although Columbia had the largest ratio of professors with earned doctorates, Harvard's teachers received the most honorary degrees.

During the twentieth century, there has been a growth of the practice of bestowing many honorary degrees on the same individuals, usually well known public figures. This practice has invariably been more beneficial to the institution—especially in terms of publicity—than to the recipient.

None of the recipients of honorary degrees awarded by Harvard or Columbia before 1787 collected more than five honorary degrees during his lifetime. Edward Everett (LL.D., Harvard, 1835), orator, politician, and later president of Harvard, was the only recipient at Harvard, Columbia, or North Carolina who acquired more than five honorary degrees. His string of six and President James Buchanan's six, referred to earlier, probably were high for the pre-Civil War years. By and large, however, most of the recipients of honorary degrees extended by Harvard, Columbia, and the University of North Carolina prior to 1860 received only one award. Many of those who did receive more than one honorary degree were men who had an honorary masters and in the judgment of some selecting committee had matured sufficiently to be selected for a doctorate. Then, as now, there was nothing for the recipients to gain in the way of a title by receiving a duplicate honor from another institution. Manifestly, an additional D.D. could not make Dr. Smith "Double Doctor" or "Triple Doctor" Smith.

After 1860, it became much more common to bestow several degrees on the same man. In the 1870's, the seven institutions studied²¹ gave five per cent of their honors to individuals who collected six or more honorary degrees. This includes the total number of honorary degrees received—both those given before and after the one conferred by these institutions. The trend became conspicuous during the years 1907-16; 23% of all the honorary doctorates conferred went to recipients who collected from six

²¹Smith College and the University of California gave no honorary doctorates in the 1870-79 period.

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to 27 honorary degrees each. The figure dropped to 17% in the 1919-28 period, but many of those honored in this later period are still alive and will be collecting more degrees; and it is still possible for them to surpass the earlier group.

A comparison of the seven institutions shows that Harvard and Columbia have been much more prone than the others to give honorary degrees to men who received a large number. In all periods studied at the state universities of North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Nebraska, the majority of those honored received their one and only honorary degree from one of those institutions. The median number of honorary degrees gathered by Smith College recipients was three in the period 1907-16 and one in the period 1919-28. In the case of those honored by the University of California, the median declined from three to two. In both cases, the decline is somewhat due to the fact that many of the 1919-28 recipients are living and will receive more honors. At Columbia, however, the median number increased from three for the 1907-16 decade to four in the 1919-28 period. Harvard's median stood at four in both periods.

The number of other degrees collected by the recipients of degrees at the seven institutions in the period 1919-28 indicates the superior power of Harvard and Columbia's honorary doctors to attract other honors. The data pertaining to Harvard recipients of the 1919-28 period can be analyzed to see how many honorary degrees were possessed at the time Harvard bestowed its honors upon them. Only 27% received their first honorary degrees from this institution and over half of these did not receive other honorary degrees. On the other hand, 73% already had other honorary degrees. Fifty-five per cent had from one to four, 16% had from five to nine, and two per cent had ten or more honors. Actually, many had even more because honorary degrees received in the same year from other institutions were not counted, although most of them were probably awarded a few days earlier than Harvard's, where the commencement is several days or weeks later than that of many colleges. In most cases, Harvard waited for other colleges to discover an individual's merits and then added another degree to his collection.

The Presidents of the United States have been fairly well represented among those repeatedly favored with honorary degrees. This was true before the Civil War, as indicated in Chapter II, and the tide has swelled higher ever since, reaching a grand climax in the collection of former President Herbert Hoover. The 1942-43 edition of *Who's Who in Amer-*

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ica says that he has 49 degrees, but the magazine *Time*²² credits him with 52. Oddly enough, Hoover is the only President since 1860 who has not been honored by his own alma mater. Stanford University does not give honorary degrees. One dozen or more of Hoover's honors were conferred by foreign universities in appreciation of his war relief work. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, on the other hand, has received, as of 1941, only 26.²³ Roosevelt is younger than Hoover and undoubtedly will receive other degrees. Opposition to Roosevelt, common among the very wealthy, may account in part for his fewer awards. This opposition is illustrated by the telegram sent by William Guggenheim protesting plans of the University of Pennsylvania to award an LL.D. to the President at its two hundredth anniversary celebration in 1940. Guggenheim, like John Quincy Adams who protested Harvard's award to Andrew Jackson, was an alumnus. The former manager of the Guggenheim mining properties said he was "shocked" and thought the "vast majority of our 40,000 or more alumni who are Willkie-for-President men will be equally so."²⁴ This award was made during an election campaign which, no doubt, was a factor in the protest. The chairman of the university committee replied that he too intended to vote for Willkie. However, he explained, "The office of President of the United States is the most distinguished one in this nation, and we are proud to have the man who holds that office take part in our celebration."²⁵

Presidents Chester A. Arthur and Grover Cleveland stand alone with one honorary degree each. Cleveland is said to have refused an LL.D. from Harvard in 1887 and may have rejected offers from other colleges. In any case, other institutions would be reluctant to offer honorary degrees to a man who refused the honor from Harvard. Most of the 12 honorary degrees which Woodrow Wilson received were given him before he became President of the United States. College presidents who received honorary degrees from Harvard and Columbia in the 1907-16 period collected an average of nine each, while the average number given to the Presidents of the United States from Grant to and including Coolidge was seven. The recent presidents of Harvard and Columbia averaged many more honorary degrees per man than the Presidents of the United States. Columbia's

²²*Time*, June 30, 1941, p. 47.

²³Stephen Early, Secretary to the President, supplied the writer with a list of honorary degrees received by the President.

²⁴*New York World Telegram*, Sept. 3, 1940, p. 19.

²⁵*New York Herald Tribune*, Sept. 4, 1940. The degree was conferred on Sept. 20, 1940.

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President Butler received over 35 degrees while former President Lowell of Harvard collected 20 or more.

Were the honorary degree recipients of the seven institutions selected from the outstanding persons throughout the nation or were local individuals honored? The general trend since 1787 has been to give a slightly larger share of the honors to citizens from outside the state in which the institution is located. However, universities just beginning to grant honorary doctorates usually bestow most of them on local people. This was true of Harvard and Columbia in the Colonial period and also of the Universities of Nebraska and Wisconsin in the 1870's.

In the 1907-16 decade, the institutions which honored the smallest percentage of local persons were Columbia, Harvard, and Wisconsin. Wisconsin bestowed only 13% of its honors on men from within the state. The University of North Carolina did not follow the trend of other universities. It conferred a larger share (two thirds) on North Carolina residents in the 1919-28 decade than in any other period. While only one per cent of those included in the *Who's Who*²⁶ of this period were from North Carolina, 67% of the degrees were conferred on local men. As might be expected, the quality of the recipients from within the state appear definitely lower than the quality of others. While all those from outside the state who received honorary degrees from this institution were included in *Who's Who*, less than three-fourths of the local recipients were included. For the seven institutions,²⁷ proportionately twice as many of the local recipients failed to make *Who's Who* as did those from other states.

Did the foreign countries with the greatest scholars and the best scientists receive the most honorary degrees from American universities? Were selections influenced by friendliness toward the United States or language preferences? The seven institutions studied conferred only 123 honorary doctorates on foreigners in the periods examined, too small a group on which to base definite conclusions. Certain significant trends are apparent, however.

The first honorary doctorate Harvard conferred on a foreigner was given to Joseph Dupas de Valmais, French Consul, in 1779. Two more degrees went to Frenchmen in the following decade, one to a diplomat and

²⁶*Who's Who in America*, Vol. 13, 1924-25.

²⁷Harvard had the highest proportion of recipients in *Who's Who* in the two decades surveyed (1907-1916 and 1919-28) and also the highest proportion in the *Dictionary of American Biography* in the 1830 decade. The University of Wisconsin had the highest percentage of recipients in the *D.A.B.* for the 1870-79 period.

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the other to General Lafayette. In these instances the honorary degrees were clearly given not as a recognition of scholarly achievement but for services on behalf of a friendly nation. In the 1830 decade, Harvard and Columbia gave nine honorary doctorates to foreigners. Four went to Canadians, one to a Cuban, and one to a gentleman from the Barbadoes. The remaining three were given to a German and two Englishmen.

In the decade 1870-79 only seven degrees (6%), the lowest percentage in any of the periods studied were given to foreigners and all went to Englishmen. This reflected, perhaps, a lessening of the traditional American antagonism toward the British. (The LL.D. conferred *in absentia* on Prime Minister Winston Churchill by Rochester University and the LL.D. awarded by Harvard to the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, both in 1941, reflected the strong feeling of sympathy which many Americans have felt for England since the outbreak of the Second World War.) The two decades of the twentieth century showed a large numerical increase and a substantial percentage increase in honors given to foreigners. In the 1907-16 decade, 20% of all the honorary doctorates conferred by the seven institutions went to foreigners. This dropped to 12% for the 1919-28 period. The extreme isolationist attitude was very strong following the First World War and this is reflected in the decline (nearly 40%) in the degrees given to foreigners. Sixty-one honorary doctorates were given to foreigners in the 1907-16 period, but only 43 in the 1919-28 years, even though the total doctorates given increased by more than ten per cent.

Germans, Englishmen, and Frenchmen, in this order, received the largest share of honors in the decade preceding the First World War. During this period the United States was on friendly terms with all three nations. Columbia gave ten doctorates to Germans and only three to Englishmen. Most of the Germans honored were scholars and scientists, but both Columbia and the University of Wisconsin gave LL.D.'s to Count Johann von Bernstorff, the German Ambassador to the United States. Neither of these universities gave any degrees to Germans in the post-war decade. Harvard, which honored five Germans in the 1907-16 period, was the only one of the seven institutions to honor a German in the 1919-28 period: Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, a member of the Hague Tribunal and an international figure.

The case of Count von Bernstorff is an example of the extremes to which honorary degree committees may go in reflecting public sentiment. A popular diplomat, the German Ambassador was showered with honors before the First World War. The degree of Doctor of Laws was bestowed

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upon him 10 times—by Princeton, the University of Chicago, Brown, the University of Pittsburgh, Union, Columbia, Franklin and Marshall, Johns Hopkins, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Wisconsin. After the United States entered the war, von Bernstorff became very unpopular in the eyes of most Americans and much of the hatred engendered against Germany was concentrated upon him. Princeton and the University of Pittsburgh withdrew the honors they had given him. In March, 1918, the University of Chicago's board of trustees likewise deprived the Ambassador of his LL.D. and said the action was taken "not because the United States is at war with Germany, but on account of the fact that the Ambassador, while he was the guest of this country . . . was engaged in a series of transactions in violation of the laws of the United States."²⁸ In May of the same year, Brown University cancelled von Bernstorff's honorary degree because "he was guilty of conduct dishonorable alike in a gentleman and a diplomat."²⁹ This action of the Brown board of trustees carried with it "provisions that von Bernstorff's name be stricken from the list of honorary alumni and omitted from future publications of the University."³⁰ The trustees of Union College in 1918, four years after conferring an LL.D. upon him and making him an honorary Chancellor of the University, met and rescinded their action and ordered his name expunged from the list of honorary chancellors and honorary alumni of the college.³¹ History has since vindicated von Bernstorff of the charges of being guilty of criminal or dishonorable acts³² and credits him with having been among the better elements in Germany's pre-war government.³³

In contrast with Germans, Belgians received five of the 30 honorary doctorates given by Harvard and Columbia in the post-war decade. The five degrees went to three individuals. Both institutions honored King Albert, who was at the peak of his popularity, and Cardinal Mercier. In 1922 Columbia gave an LL.D. to Baron Emile de Cartier de Marchienne, the Ambassador from Belgium, who was also honored by Princeton, Brown, Rochester, Villanova, and Oxford. These degrees were certainly a recognition of the part the country played in the First World War rather than a recognition of Belgian scholarly achievements.

²⁸*New York Daily Tribune*, March 21, 1918.

²⁹*Philadelphia Public Ledger*, May 30, 1918.

³⁰*Ibid.*, May 30, 1918.

³¹*New York Times*, June 9, 1918.

³²*Ibid.*, Oct. 10, 1936, and Oct. 7, 1939.

³³See comments made by Datus C. Smith, Jr., on this case. *The American Scholar*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Fall 1937. p. 414.

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Honorary degrees have been used on frequent occasions to nurture international good will. The various degrees extended to King Albert, General Foch, and British diplomats were undoubtedly given for this purpose. However, few of our Latin American neighbors have been honored. One person each from Brazil and Argentina were the only individuals from South America to be honored in any of the periods studied. Both of these men received honorary degrees in the 1907-16 period and were diplomats representing their countries in the United States.

In all the periods studied, only three individuals from Asia were honored. Harvard gave a degree to a resident of Ceylon in 1909, but he was an Englishman, the director of Ceylon's Royal Botanical Gardens. Columbia in 1919 bestowed a Litt.D. degree on Viscount Kikukiro Ishii, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States. The citation made when this degree was conferred seems ironical in the light of subsequent events: "Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from Japan to the United States; scholar, orator, and statesman; welcome representative of a great people who, during the past fifty years, have laid the sure foundations for notable service not only to advancing civilization of the Orient but to the peace and good order of the World." In 1922 Columbia gave an LL.D. to the Chinese representative at the Washington Conference on Arms Limitation, Alfred Sao-Ke Sze. In general, the foreigners honored represented the stronger nations and, after 1918, those that had been allied in the war against the Central Powers.

The church membership of the recipients of honorary degrees is some indication of the religious influences within particular institutions. In the past 50 or 60 years, there has been a pronounced decline of the place of religion and the church in American society. The Protestant tradition, however, is strong and permeates the state universities as well as institutions of denominational origin. Of the recipients of degrees from the seven institutions studied in all periods, 95% of those whose church affiliations were found were Protestant.³⁴

Church membership was found for over one-third of all recipients. As explained before, if the church membership or preference of every recipient had been found, the percentage of honors given to members of the various

³⁴The source of information on church affiliation was the same as that for age, occupation, etc.: *The Dictionary of American Biography* and the volumes of *Who's Who in America*. Facts on those not included in the foregoing were gathered from sources such as *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, *Yale Obituary Record*, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Pierre Keys' Musical Who's Who*, *Biographical Directory of American Congress*, and *Burgess, Order of Deacons of the Protestant Episcopal Church*.

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religious groups might be somewhat different. However, most of those who did not have their church preference recorded probably had little interest in religion and a nominal preference would have been of little significance. Those whose religious affiliations were given were probably much more active in church affairs and their membership was much more apt to have been a significant consideration in the bestowing of honorary degrees upon them.

All of those honored by the four state universities studied were Protestants. Only four Catholics and no Jews were found among all the recipients of honorary doctorates of all seven institutions in the periods before 1900. Three of the Catholics were the Frenchmen honored by Harvard during the Revolutionary days. Harvard gave an honorary A.M. to a Jew, Judah Monis, an instructor in Hebrew at Harvard, in 1720. He was probably the first of his faith to receive an honorary degree in America.

The state institutions are, of course, in predominantly Protestant culture settings. Most of the trustees, faculty, students, and citizens in their areas consciously or unconsciously hold Protestant viewpoints. On the other hand, Columbia and Harvard are located in cities that have been for many years large cosmopolitan centers with strong Catholic and Jewish groups. Of three honorary doctorates given by Harvard and Columbia to Jews in recent years, two, one each from Harvard and Columbia, were bestowed upon Benjamin Cardozo, who later became a Justice of the Supreme Court. The third was awarded by Harvard to Solomon Schechter (Litt.D., 1911), President of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Catholic institutions have given most of their honorary degrees to Catholics. Twenty-four of the 26 recipients at the University of Notre Dame for the 1907-16 period whose religious affiliations were found were Catholics, and in the 1919-28 period, 25 of the 28 recipients whose church membership was ascertained were Catholics.

Only 11 Catholics were honored by the seven institutions in all the seven institutions in all the periods studied. Eight of the 11, including Governor Al Smith, received their degrees from Columbia in the 1919-28 decade.

Although Baptists received less than three per cent of the honorary degrees in the periods studied before 1900, they obtained more than eight per cent of the total in the periods since 1900. Only one Methodist was honored in the 1870's and none previous to that time. In the 1907-16 period, Methodists took six per cent of the honorary doctorates conferred on churchmen, and in the post-war decade, 14%. The Episcopalians and the Unitarians received the greatest share of degrees awarded in all periods

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but have tended recently to become less dominant. Of the church members honored in the 1870-79 and 1830-39 periods, over seven-tenths belonged to these groups, but their number was reduced to about four-tenths of the total in the periods after 1900. The increased number of degrees conferred in these later periods by the five institutions other than Harvard and Columbia were important factors in reducing the ratio. Even at Harvard and Columbia, however, which had close ties to these groups, the percentage decreased. The number of Unitarians honored by Harvard declined from 74% in the decade 1830-39 to 23% in the years 1919-28. Similarly, of the Columbia recipients whose church memberships were found, 84% were Episcopalians in the decade 1870-79 while only 48% were Episcopalians in the 1919-28 decade.

The selection of honorary degree recipients reflects not only the religious atmosphere enveloping a university but also the dominant political influence. The University of North Carolina has shown this most vividly. In the three periods studied following the Civil War, all the recipients whose political affiliations were found³⁵ were Democrats except in the period 1919-28, when two Republicans were allowed to mount the commencement platform. Forty-three of 45 recipients of North Carolina's honorary doctorates in these periods were Democrats.

During the Revolutionary period Harvard, under the control of the Patriots, gave most of its degrees to the conservative members of this group, the type who later became Federalists. Columbia, then the Loyalist-controlled King's College, gave all of its honorary doctorates to Tories. In the decade 1830-39, Harvard, Columbia, and North Carolina gave nearly three-fourths of their honors to Federalists or Whigs and the rest to prominent figures, most of them conservatives, in the Democratic Party.

After the Civil War, of those recipients whose political affiliations were found, 101 were Republicans and 75 were Democrats. Although Farmer-Laborites and Socialists have elected a number of Congressmen, no members of these groups were found among the recipients of honorary degrees from the seven institutions. The two dominant parties, and particularly the party with which those in control of specific institutions were most sympathetic, monopolized the honors.

³⁵The political affiliation was given in the biographical dictionaries for about one-fourth (23%) of all recipients. The three-fourths omitted were those for whom politics was probably of little importance and thus of less significance in obtaining an honorary degree. Such groups as clergymen and scientists included few persons whose political affiliations were found. In the following comparisons, the total for whom the political affiliation was given was taken as one hundred per cent.

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At Harvard, the Republicans received 77% in 1870-79, 65% in 1907-16, and 78% in 1919-28, while the Democrats received the remainder. Republicans took the lion's share also at Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Smith, while all the 16 recipients at the University of California were members of the G.O.P.

Not only is there a strong tendency for those in control of institutions of higher learning to confer honorary degrees upon persons of similar political and religious faith, but there is also a tradition of giving degrees to themselves as trustees, faculty members, presidents, and alumni. The selection of recipients of honorary degrees is usually made by three groups: trustees, presidents, and faculty. The trustees at Columbia, Harvard, and the University of California have selected the honorary degree recipients, while the faculty has made the selection at the Universities of North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Nebraska. At Smith College, both faculty and trustees have shared in the selection. At Harvard, honorary degrees have been conferred by the vote of the institution's corporation with the consent of the Overseers. The corporation is composed of seven individuals—the president, the treasurer, and five fellows. The Overseers have about 30 members.

When these various groups give degrees to their own members, the practice clearly becomes a form of self-congratulation. A Committee of the American Association of University Professors voiced this sentiment in 1917: "There is agreement to the effect that the greatest difficulty, and the abuses, if any, arise when an institution confers honors on its own alumni or immediate constituency."³⁶ However, such protests have had little effect on actual practice.

Nearly 30% of all the persons honored in all periods studied were alumni. They accounted for nearly three-fourths of all Harvard's honorary doctorates conferred before 1787. The Columbia graduates received their largest proportion in the 1830's (28%). The peak for the University of North Carolina alumni was the decade 1870-79, when former students obtained 45% of the doctorates *honoris causa*. Alumni were generally less favored in the years 1907-16, but, with the exception of the University of Nebraska, all of the seven institutions studied gave them a higher percentage of honors again in the 1918-29 decade.

The chances for "inbreeding" are even greater among trustees, as they

³⁶*Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, Vol. III, No. 8, December, 1917, p. 14 ff.

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constitute a small body compared with most alumni or faculty groups. They probably have more to do with the actual selection of recipients for honorary degrees than anyone else, with the possible exception of the president. The University of Nebraska and Smith College have clear records in this respect; none of their recipients of honorary degrees have been trustees. Harvard, in the earlier periods, gave the largest percentage to its own trustees; 36% of those honored in the 1830's were Overseers at some time during their lifetimes. Only five per cent of Harvard's recipients in the 1907-16 period were trustees, but this increased to 11% in the following decade. Wisconsin had honored none of its trustees in the 1907-16 period but gave an LL.D. to one in the post-war decade. One of the two recipients of Columbia's honorary doctorates in the period before 1787 was a trustee, and in the decade 1830-39, 15% were trustees. However, Columbia's trustees conferred few honors on themselves in the later periods. One trustee was honored in the 1870's, one in the pre-war decade, and none in the years 1919-28. Both North Carolina and California bestowed honors on their own trustees but honored fewer after the First World War than before. In general, trustees received eight per cent of all the honorary doctorates given by the seven universities in all the periods studied.

If honorary degrees were strictly academic honors, faculty members probably would have a more valid claim to them than most trustees, alumni and presidents. However, faculty members, both active and retired, received fewer honors in the seven institutions than did the alumni, and even less than trustees in the periods before 1860. In the later periods, the number of trustees fell below the faculty. In 1919-28, 18 board members and 45 professors received awards. Professors at the University of Nebraska received one-third of this institution's awards in the 1919-28 period, the largest proportion of any of the seven. Smith College and the University of California gave one-fifth or more to their professors, while Columbia gave only two per cent to its professors.³⁷

There has been little change in the percentage of honorary doctorates given to faculty members. The teachers received 19% in the period before 1787, 14% in the 1830 decade, 16% in the 1907-16 period, and 13% in the 1919-28 period.

A college usually confers more honorary degrees on other presidents

³⁷Many Columbia faculty members, however, were honored at the celebration in 1929 when 134 honorary doctorates were conferred.

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than on its own. But presidents, who usually have more to say about the conferring of honorary degrees than any other single individual, do receive awards from their own institutions. It will be recalled that the first honorary degree given by an American college was conferred by Harvard in 1692 on its own president. In the five periods studied, Harvard gave honorary doctorates to seven of its presidents, Columbia honored ex-president Seth Low with an LL.D. in 1914; California honored three of its presidents; North Carolina, two; and Smith College, one. The Universities of Nebraska and Wisconsin, however, did not confer honors on their executive officers.

OCCUPATIONS OF RECIPIENTS

The attitudes and ideals of those in control of institutions of higher learning are reflected to a considerable extent in the occupational groups which they honor. The granting of many degrees to clergymen obviously indicates that religious influences are strong and highly respected. Bestowing honors on bankers indicates that this group and what it stands for are held in high regard by selecting boards. To some extent, of course, the occupations represented by the honorary degree recipients are a reflection of the attitudes and values esteemed by contemporary society. The sudden increase in the number of honorary degrees given to military leaders following the First World War was a reflection of the attitudes held by the public.

There has been a decided diminution in the percentage of honors given to the representatives of organized religion and a substantial increase of the share of honorary doctorates conferred upon the representatives of business and industry. From 1830 to 1916, there was a strong trend toward granting a large proportion of honors to those in the academic and professional fields, but there was a sharp drop in the 1919-28 period. Artists, authors, and journalists have received few honors in any period but have taken a comparatively larger share since 1900. Government officials and politicians have, in all the periods studied, received approximately one-fifth of the total honorary doctorates from the seven institutions. The percentage of lawyers in the total shrank from nine per cent in the 1830's to three per cent in the 1919-28 period. Military leaders have been treated erratically. Their share rose sharply during and immediately following war periods and slumped to almost nothing in other periods.

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TABLE 2

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF RECIPIENTS OF HONORARY DOCTORATES FROM SEVEN INSTITUTIONS

	Before 1787	1830- 1839	1870- 1879	1907- 1916	1919- 1928	All Periods
Academic and professional ^a	33%	22%	33%	62%	50%	49%
Religious ^b	26%	45%	36%	7%	7%	16%
Literary and fine arts ^c	—	2%	1%	5%	5%	4%
Editorial and journalistic ^d	—	—	—	1%	2%	1%
Political ^e	30%	21%	24%	19%	20%	21%
Lawyers	—	9%	6%	2%	3%	4%
Business ^f	—	—	1%	3%	8%	4%
Military ^g	11%	—	—	1%	4%	2%

^aCollege professors, deans, college presidents and other educational administrators, scientists, research specialists, museum directors, librarians, engineers, architects, and medical doctors.

^bClergymen, bishops, missionaries, religious and social welfare workers, and reformers.

^cPlaywrights, authors, poets, artists, actors, and musicians.

^dEditors, journalists, and publishers.

^eHolders of political office, governors, senators, representatives, judges, kings, and diplomats.

^fBankers, merchants, industrialists, manufacturers, and philanthropists.

^gArmy and Navy officers.

Harvard and Columbia have followed the group pattern quite consistently, but because they have given more honorary degrees than the other five institutions combined, they have had an excessive influence on the total picture. Columbia had a decrease from 56% in 1907-16 to 28% for the following decade in awards to those in the academic and professional occupations. Columbia's percentage of honorary doctorates to those in the literary and fine arts field has been consistently higher than that of the other six institutions.

The University of North Carolina's greatest deviation from the general picture has been in awards in the military and political fields. On the one hand, it has given no honors to the military; on the other, it has granted the largest share to holders of political office. The University of Wisconsin gave a higher ratio of honors to the academic and professional group (which received 83% of all its honorary doctorates in the 1907-16 period) and less to the other groups. The University of Nebraska followed Wisconsin quite closely, but gave a larger share to the literary and fine art fields. Smith College also gave a greater proportion (about four-fifths) of its honors to the academic professions; most of its remaining

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honors went to social workers. The University of California's awards were similar to those of Wisconsin in that the majority went to academic groups and few to clergymen. But California, like Harvard, gave a sizable share of its honors to business men, especially in the 1920's.

The general long-time trend at Harvard, Columbia, North Carolina, and Wisconsin was, until the 1919-28 decade, to confer a large share of the honors on professors. At the younger institutions—Nebraska, California, and Smith—this trend continued through the 1919-28 decade. Of those who were awarded degrees in the periods before 1900, one-third were professors of theology; but in the periods after the turn of the century only one of 20 was chosen from this group. Awards to professors of the classics also declined, while awards to those in the natural sciences increased.

Of the professors honored at Harvard in the 1907-16 and the 1919-28 periods, more than one-third were members of the institution's faculty. Fewer professors in the fields of religion, history, and natural science, and more in medicine were honored in 1919-28 than in 1907-16. Among the widely known professors honored by Harvard were Frederick Jackson Turner, Roscoe Pound, and Alfred North Whitehead.

Columbia gave 29 honorary doctorates to college professors in 1907-16 but only seven in 1919-28. Natural science, philosophy, history, and English were the fields from which most of the recipients were drawn. Very few, however, were on Columbia's own faculty.³⁸ Twenty of the 29 in the 1907-16 decade were foreigners—nine were from Germany, five from France, and two from Italy. However, 12 of the 20 foreigners were visiting professors at Columbia of whom at least eight were from Germany and holders of what was known as Kaiser Wilhelm professorships. The University of Berlin more or less returned the courtesy when, during the same period, it awarded honorary degrees to the Americans who held Theodore Roosevelt exchange professorships. When the practice of giving honorary degrees to exchange teachers from abroad was suspended after the First World War, it materially reduced the number of honors Columbia gave to college professors.

Of all seven institutions, the University of North Carolina gave the lowest proportion of its honorary doctorates to college professors. The few honored were largely drawn from the fields of history or English and nearly one-third of the teachers honored in these two decades were from the uni-

³⁸There were four in 1907-16 and two in 1919-28 period (visiting professors not counted).

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versity's own faculty. Professors from the University of Chicago and the University of Virginia accounted for another third of the honors.

Wisconsin, on the other hand, bestowed approximately two-thirds of all its honors in the 1907-16 decade, and half of its awards in the following period, on professors. Medicine and natural science were the most favored fields. Considerable respect for Harvard's scholarship is indicated by the fact that Wisconsin gave more degrees to professors from Harvard than to its own faculty.

The University of Nebraska gave nearly half of its honorary doctorates in these two periods to professors. Over two-thirds of the recipients were in the fields of the practical arts of agriculture, engineering, and medicine. Nearly one-third of the honors went to members of its own staff, many of whom were practicing physicians on the faculty of the medical school. At Nebraska, as well as at some other medical schools, the professors of medicine were paid small salaries or none at all. Conceivably, the awards were sometimes designed to make up for this situation.

The University of California gave approximately one-fourth of its honorary degrees to teachers in the 1907-16 decade and almost doubled this proportion in the 1919-28 period. Nearly half of the teachers were in the natural sciences and over one-third were members of California's faculty or retired professors. Robert A. Millikan was one of the most distinguished of the professors honored.

Smith College gave about half of its honors to professors in these periods—especially to those teaching English. The tendency for a college to honor its own faculty members and those from institutions most like itself is evident in the Smith awards. Most of the honors of this women's college went to women and to professors from its own or similar institutions. Over one-third of the awards to teachers were given to Smith's own faculty members. Wellesley faculty members received the second largest number.

College presidents were proportionately the most popular occupational group at the honorary degree conferring ceremonies of the seven institutions studied. At Harvard, California, and Smith, college presidents were honored in every period studied. In only one period were they missing from the ranks of recipients at Columbia and North Carolina. In the 1919-28 decade, they were honored by all of the seven institutions. Three of the five college presidents given awards in 1907-16 by the University of North Carolina were the heads of three other publicly supported schools in the state. Smith College, in 1907-16 and 1919-28, honored six presidents, all of women's colleges and, with one exception, all women.

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Educational administrators outside the college and university field received few honorary degrees. Columbia and Smith each chose a principal of a school for the deaf. Superintendents of public school systems received very few awards in proportion to their number. Among the few awards in this connection were those made by California to school heads of San Francisco and Los Angeles, by Nebraska to the school head of Omaha, and by North Carolina to the state superintendent of public instruction and one local city school superintendent. All of the public school officials given degrees were honored by state institutions in the more recent periods. On the other hand, Harvard, Columbia, and Smith, private institutions, honored one or more heads of private secondary schools at least once during the periods studied.

The heads of large educational foundations were not overlooked. Harvard granted an LL.D. in 1923 to John H. Dillard, president of the Jeanes Foundation and the John F. Slater Fund. Columbia gave the president of the Carnegie Institute, John C. Merriam, a Doctor of Science degree in 1921, the year after he took office. While Dr. Merriam was on the faculty of the University of California from 1894 to 1920, he received no honorary degrees, but he received four honorary doctorates in the two years following his acceptance of the presidency of the Carnegie Institute; Yale, Princeton, and Wesleyan joined with Columbia in giving him honorary doctorates. It is significant that at least two foundations, the General Education Board and the Rockefeller Foundation, have adopted the policy that their officers should decline all honorary degrees.

Of some 45 persons who were not professors and who received honorary doctorates from the seven institutions in the 1907-16 and 1919-28 decades, 19 were engineers and architects and 26 were scientists and scholars—largely in the natural sciences. Nebraska and Wisconsin gave the highest percentage of their honors to individuals in these fields. The only one of all recipients found to be an American Indian was ethnologist Francis La Flesche; he was honored with a Litt.D. degree by Nebraska in 1925. This institution also bestowed an LL.D. on James Carroll, a bacteriologist who aided Walter Reed in his famous yellow fever experiments in 1907.

Six geologists of the U. S. Geological Survey were recipients of honorary doctorates; one, Samuel F. Emmons, was given Sc.D.'s by both Columbia and Harvard in 1909. Three city engineers and three scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture were honored. Nearly all of the government-employed scientists received awards in the 1907-16 period. In contrast, in the 1919-28 period more of the scientists honored were in the

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employ of large industrial profit-making concerns. Four of the five degrees awarded to this group were made in this decade. Frank B. Jewett, chief engineer and vice president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, was given Sc.D.'s by both Columbia and Wisconsin in 1927; Irving Langmuir, research chemist of the General Electric Company, was honored by Columbia in 1925; and C. F. Burgess, electrical engineer of the Burgess Battery Company, was given an Sc.D. by Wisconsin in 1926. These awards reflect the growth of the large industrial research organizations in the 1920's and their ability to attract outstanding scientists. They may also indicate the universities' increased admiration for the efforts of private business, in contrast with governmental efforts, to encourage science.

The medical doctors given degrees by the seven institutions included several outstanding figures: William C. Gorgas, chief sanitary officer of the Canal Zone during the construction of the Panama Canal (Sc.D., Harvard and Columbia); William J. Mayo, of Rochester, Minn. (Sc.D., Columbia, 1910, and Harvard, 1924); Surgeon Alexis Carrel (Sc.D., Columbia, 1913); and Rupert Blue, head of the U. S. Public Health Service (Sc.D., Wisconsin, 1913).

Smith, California, and Nebraska did not confer any honorary degrees on medical men not connected with colleges and universities. Wisconsin honored one in 1907-16 but none in 1919-28. The University of North Carolina honored a tuberculosis specialist in 1926 and a cancer specialist in 1927. Columbia honored four doctors in the 1907-16 period and one in the following decade, and Harvard gave two honorary degrees to members of this group, one in each decade.

Writers, actors, painters, sculptors, and musicians received few honors before 1900 at the seven institutions studied. Three authors were the only representatives of these groups honored in the periods before 1900, but 44 artists, including some from each of the specializations mentioned, received awards in the two decades surveyed after 1900. One of the most recent occupations admitted to the "fellowship of honorable men" was acting. Otis Skinner, given an honorary M.A. in 1895 by Tufts College, was the first actor, as far as the writer has been able to discover, to be singled out. Two outstanding women of the stage, Maude Adams and Minnie Maddern Fiske, were later made Doctors of Letters by the University of Wisconsin.

Three painters and one sculptor were honored in the 1907-16 period but only one in the following period. The Anglo-American portrait painter John Singer Sargent was given the Doctor of Arts degree by Harvard in 1916. Columbia gave a Litt.D. in 1913 to the sculptor Daniel Chester

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French, whose statue *Alma Mater*, adorns Columbia's campus; and in 1916 it granted the same degree to Edwin Blashfield, the painter of many of the murals in the National Capitol and the Library of Congress. Nebraska gave D.F.A.'s to Lawton S. Parker in 1914 and Robert Harshe in 1927.

The University of Nebraska and Columbia were the only institutions of the seven to give awards to musicians in the decades studied. The former honored one, Sergei Rachmaninoff (Mus.D., 1922), outstanding composer and pianist; and Columbia honored three: Walter Damrosch (Mus.D., 1914), conductor of the New York Symphony Orchestra; William Mengelberg (Mus.D., 1928), successor to Damrosch; and Miles Farrow (Mus.D., 1926), organist of New York City's Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The famous Polish pianist, Ignace Jan Paderewski (LL.D., 1922), was honored by Columbia at the time he was Poland's Prime Minister.

The actors, painters, and musicians combined were awarded fewer honors than were authors. Washington Irving, noted American writer, and James Grahame, an Englishman, were awarded LL.D.'s by Harvard in the 1830 decade. The only writer to receive a doctorate from the seven institutions in the 1870's was another resident of England who was given an LL.D. by Columbia in 1877. Three of the universities in the 1907-16 period and four in the 1919-28 decade gave awards to authors. In the former period, Harvard honored four writers, including the Anglo-American novelist Henry James. Columbia gave Litt.D.'s to three literary figures and California bestowed LL.D.'s upon two, one of whom was John Muir, author and naturalist. Both Harvard and Columbia gave Litt.D.'s rather than LL.D.'s to authors and artists after 1900. Among the outstanding writers given honorary doctorates in the 1919-28 period were Robert Bridges, poet laureate of England (Litt.D., Harvard, 1924), Booth Tarkington (Litt.D., Columbia, 1924), Willa Cather (Litt.D., Columbia, 1928), DuBose Heyward (Litt.D., University of North Carolina, 1928), and Hamlin Garland (Litt.D., University of Wisconsin, 1926).

The granting of degrees to journalists and publishers is also a relatively recent practice. Columbia gave more honorary degrees to this group than the other six universities combined. In the 1907-16 decade, three editors and one publisher were honored: Richard Gilder, editor of the *Century*, E. L. Burlingame of *Scribner's Magazine*, Charles R. Miller, editor of the *New York Times*, and George H. Putnam, head of the Putnam publishing house. All were given Litt.D.'s. In the 1919-28 period, Columbia honored the publisher of the *New York Times*, Adolph S. Ochs; and four editors: E. P. Mitchell of the *New York Sun*, Robert Bridges of *Scrib-*

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ner's Magazine, Victor Lawson of the *Chicago Daily News*, and John St. Loe Strachey of the *London Spectator*. Most of these men could be accurately described as publishing executives. However, Clarence Poe (LL.D., North Carolina, 1928), editor of the *Progressive Farmer*, Lelia Mechlin (D.F.A., Nebraska, 1927), art critic of the Washington, D. C., *Evening Star*, and Walter Lippmann (LL.D., Wisconsin, 1927), former associate editor of the *New Republic* and then on the staff of the *New York World*, were practicing journalists.

Holders of political office have consistently been very much in evidence on commencement platforms. One of five of all the honorary doctorates of the seven institutions for the periods studied were awarded to this group. As Table 3 shows, the number given in the several periods varied widely from none in one decade for Nebraska and Smith to more than 50% for North Carolina in the 1907-16 decade.

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGE OF HONORARY DOCTORATES TO HOLDERS OF
POLITICAL OFFICE*

	Harvard Univ.	Columbia Univ.	Univ. of N. Carolina	Univ. of Wisconsin	Univ. of Nebraska	Univ. of California	Smith College
Before 1787	28	<i>50</i>	—	—	—	—	—
1830-1839	33	11	18	—	—	—	—
1870-1879	<i>44</i>	2	30	<i>43</i>	0	1	—
1907-1916	20	17	<i>53</i>	8	8	17	0
1919-1928	17	28	31	15	7	<i>20</i>	5

*Includes senators, governors, cabinet members, diplomats, judges, etc. The highest percentage for each institution is in italic figures.

Those honored most frequently were judges and diplomats; about one-third were the former and one-fourth the latter. North Carolina and Harvard led in awards to the judiciary. And Harvard and Wisconsin were first in the awards to Ambassadors and Consuls, a group which received a considerably larger percentage after 1900 than in the 1830's and 1870's.

An analysis of the offices held by the politicians awarded honorary doctorates by the seven institutions in the 1919-28 period is given in Table 4. It reveals that judges from local and state courts received more degrees than any other group. The period, in general, was similar to the 1907-16 decade, when 60 politicians, of whom 17 were judges, were granted honorary degrees. In the earlier decade only four diplomatic representatives of the United States government received doctorates. But in the later period, six of the recipients were Cabinet members, three were Senators, and nine

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TABLE 4

NUMBER OF HONORARY DOCTORATES GRANTED TO HOLDERS OF
POLITICAL OFFICE, 1919-28

	Harvard Univ.	Columbia Univ.	Univ. of N. Carolina	Univ. of Wisconsin	Univ. of Nebraska	Univ. of California	Smith College	Total
Foreign politicians*	3	5	—	—	—	—	—	8
Diplomats to U. S.	—	6	—	1	—	2	—	9
U. S. diplomats	5	1	—	1	—	—	—	7
Judges†: (U. S. Supreme Court 2) (Local state courts 15)	2	7	6	3	1	3	1	23
U. S. Cabinet members	2	1	2	—	—	1	—	6
U. S. Senators	1	—	1	—	—	1	—	3
Governors (state 2)	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	3
Heads of depts. of local state government	1	—	4	—	—	—	—	5
Other	—	1‡	—	1‡	1§	2§	—	5
Total	14	23	14	6	2	9	1	69

*Other than diplomats.

†Seventeen of these are further classified as U. S. Supreme Court Justices and judges in state courts.

‡Relief administrators.

§Federal office holders.

foreign diplomats. On the other hand, 11 Governors were honored in the 1907-16 period and three in 1919-28. Members of the U. S. House of Representatives received no award in either decade, with the one exception of Representative Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama (LL.D., Columbia, 1912).

Harvard gave first honorary doctorates to diplomats in the pre-war decade and none in the 1919-28 period. The five included awards to diplomats from France, Brazil, Argentina, and Great Britain. James Bryce, then the British Ambassador, received two of these five degrees, an LL.D. in 1907 and a Litt.D. in 1909 (also LL.D., 1908, Wisconsin, and California, 1909). (It was with specific reference to practices in the United States that Bryce observed: "Honorary degrees are in some institutions, and not those usually of highest standing, conferred with a profuseness which seems to

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argue an exaggerated appreciation of inconspicuous merit.”³⁹ Harvard honored three other foreign officials in each decade: a member of the German Reichstag, a Governor of Tripoli, and a Chief Justice of Canada received doctorates in the 1907-16 years; and King Albert of Belgium, Prime Minister King of Canada, and Judge Bartholdy of the Hague Tribunal in the post-war period.

Two American diplomats, the Ambassadors to Italy and France, were honored by Harvard in the pre-war decade. Five were given LL.D.’s in the 1919-28 period. Among them were Dwight Morrow, Ambassador to Mexico, and Charles R. Crane, Minister to China, vice-chairman of Wilson’s 1912 campaign fund, and president of the Crane Plumbing Supply Company (also given an LL.D. by the University of Wisconsin). The six judges honored by Harvard in 1907-16 were all state court justices, three from Massachusetts, two from New York, and one from New Jersey. The two judges given LL.D.’s in the 1919-28 period were Edward T. Sanford of the U.S. Supreme Court, and Benjamin Cardozo, who subsequently became a member of that body. A Massachusetts Attorney General who later aided in convicting Sacco and Vanzetti was given an LL.D. in 1922. Harvard honored the elected governors of Kentucky and New York and the appointed governor of the Philippines in the 1907-16 decade. The New York Governor awarded an LL.D. by Harvard in 1910 was Charles Evans Hughes (also LL.D., Columbia, 1907), subsequently Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court. Three Cabinet members received LL.D.’s in the 1907-16 period and two in the 1919-28 period. Elihu Root, Secretary of State, received Harvard’s LL.D. in 1907 and the Secretaries of Navy and War were given LL.D.’s in 1911 and 1913. The two in the later period were Secretary of Treasury Andrew Mellon (LL.D., Harvard, 1926, and Columbia, 1924). The one Senator given an honorary doctorate was Underwood of Alabama (LL.D., 1924), who had been previously honored by Columbia while he was still a Congressman.

Of the seven institutions, Harvard honored more foreign diplomats and politicians in the pre-war decade, while Columbia gave more in the post-war decade. German Ambassador von Bernstorff was the only foreign diplomat to receive a Columbia doctorate in the former period, but six diplomats—from China, Japan, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, and France—were honored in the 1919-28 period. Except for diplomats, only one foreign politician, a French Senator, was honored in the 1907-16 period, but five—in-

³⁹Bryce, James, *American Commonwealth*, p. 725.

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cluding King Albert of Belgium, Prime Minister Briand of France, and Prime Minister Paderewski of Poland—were given LL.D.'s in the later period. Columbia honored one American diplomat in each of the two periods, Myron T. Herrick, Ambassador to France in 1915, and Maurice Egan, Ambassador to Denmark in 1919. Three American judges were given LL.D.'s in the pre-war period and seven in the 1919-28 decade. Five of the ten were New York State judges; two, Edward D. White and Harlan Fiske Stone, were among the nine U. S. Supreme Court justices; and one, John Bassett Moore, was a member of the permanent Court of Arbitration of the Hague. Columbia gave degrees to three Governors, Charles Evans Hughes of New York, Simeon E. Baldwin of Connecticut and Samuel W. McCall of Massachusetts in the 1907-16 period. Only two, Alfred E. Smith and N. L. Miller, both of New York State, were honored in the 1919-28 decade. Herbert Hoover was given an LL.D. in 1920, while he was still engaged in his European relief work. The only Cabinet member honored by Columbia in either decade was Andrew Mellon (LL.D., 1924), Secretary of the Treasury. The Columbia citation painted his career in unusually generous terms:

Graduated at the University of Pittsburgh with the Class of 1872; intimately and most influentially associated with the sound and constructive industrial and financial development of that great capital of industry and its neighborhood; laying aside the personal care of large interests to give faithful and highly skilled service to the American people; as Secretary of the Treasury, forty-ninth in that long succession which begins with the name of Alexander Hamilton, Columbia's greatest gift to the nation; thorough in grasp of the fundamental principles of economics and public finance; patient and clear in their exposition; untiring and courageous in their defense; highest type of generous and devoted public servant.⁴⁰

The University of North Carolina favored more judges, Governors, and Cabinet members than any other of the seven universities, but most of them were of local renown. Ten of the 11 judges honored in the pre- and post-war decades were members of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. Five Governors had LL.D.'s bestowed upon them in the pre-war period and one in the 1919-28 decade. All but Governor Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey were from North Carolina. Every local Governor who served during the 1907-16 decade was honored. North Carolina took special interest in honoring Democrats. The only Republican politician made a Doctor of Laws was a U. S. Circuit Court Judge who was given an LL.D. in 1927. Five members of President Wilson's Cabinet were given LL.D.'s; these in-

⁴⁰*Columbia University Honorary Degrees, 1902-1932*, p. 92.

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cluded Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy and a native son, and William G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury. Vice-President Thomas R. Marshall and Senator Redfield of North Carolina were given LL.D.'s in the 1907-16 period. Senator Carter Glass of Virginia received an LL.D. in 1923. No foreign diplomats received honorary degrees from this institution, but an alumnus who had formerly been in the United States diplomatic service was given an honorary LL.D. in the pre-war period. The remaining five politicians honored in these two decades were the heads of various state departments.

Only two politicians received honorary doctorates from the University of Wisconsin in the 1907-16 period. Both were foreign diplomats: British Ambassador Bryce (LL.D., 1908), and German Ambassador von Bernstorff (LL.D., 1910). Wisconsin honored six holders of political office in the 1919-28 decade, including a French diplomat to this country, a former United States Ambassador to China, and three judges serving Wisconsin state courts.

The University of Nebraska gave few degrees to politicians. The only one honored in the 1907-16 period was a judge of the Nebraska Supreme Court and the two given honorary doctorates in the 1919-28 period were a local judge and the Assistant Secretary of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The University of California singled out five politicians in the 1907-16 period and nine in the following decade. Unlike North Carolina, most of those honored by California were Republicans. Of the five, two were judges and three were foreign diplomats: Ambassador Bryce and the Prime Ministers of Australia and British Columbia. In the 1919-28 period, three judges, all from California courts, were given LL.D.'s along with British Ambassador Sir Auckland Campbell Geddes (LL.D., 1922); the Canadian diplomat and industrialist, Vincent Massey (LL.D., 1928); and Hubert Work, Secretary of the Interior (LL.D., 1927). The former Secretary of State and Senator, Elihu Root, was given an LL.D. by California in 1923 to add to his collection of nearly 20 honorary degrees. The remaining two recipients were W. B. Greeley, Chief Forester of the United States, and Stephen T. Mather, the director of the National Park Service.

Smith College gave only one honorary doctorate to a politician during the two decades. In contrast to the other six institutions, which honored only male politicians, Smith College conferred its LL.D. in 1925 on a woman, Florence E. Allen, then Judge of the Supreme Court of Ohio.

What considerations, other than the merit of recipients, entered into

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the selection of the holders of political office? The high percentage of local men honored indicates that proximity to the institution was a very important factor. The marked tendency to give doctorates to Governors and judges of the local state indicates that the strategic importance of a position was also a vital consideration. Many of the representatives and diplomats of foreign countries were individuals about whom the honorary degree committees probably knew very little, in which case the degrees were conferred more as a compliment to the foreign nation than as an award for the individual's accomplishments. At the Universities of North Carolina and California the political party to which the recipient belonged seemed to be an especially important consideration. But in all the universities apparently considerations other than merit alone determined the selection of recipients.

Do the larger universities tend to favor liberal or conservative politicians? The answer depends, of course, on personal interpretations of the terms "liberal" and "conservative." The granting of an honorary degree by Princeton to the Socialist leader and alumnus Norman Thomas was a unique exception to a general rule. A more typical example of Princeton's recipients is President Harding (LL.D., 1922). His citation read in part:

Our people are one in honoring his readiness to seek the best advice . . . his capable handling of complicated difficulties . . . and self-effacing modesty. The sweeping away of extravagant waste . . . shows him a master in finance. His vote as Senator for the anti-strike clause in the railroad bill and his attitude as President on the bonus reveal his quiet courage. . . . He stands in the tradition of Lincoln, a man of the people . . . heeding the will of the people and the need of the world.⁴¹

In the case of the less extreme liberal and conservative politicians, scholarly attainments seemed to be an important consideration. The liberal Justice Cardozo of the U. S. Supreme Court received more honorary degrees than his more conservative but less scholarly colleagues, Pierce Butler and James C. McReynolds. The more conservative politicians of scholarly attainments, however, have probably received more honorary degrees than equally scholarly liberals. Justice Holmes received five honorary degrees while Chief Justice Hughes received four times as many. Justice Hugo L. Black has one honorary degree (LL.D., University of Alabama, 1941) and Justice Felix Frankfurter two, but the more conservative Justice Willis Van Devanter was awarded five LL.D.'s.

How did awards to the Roosevelt Cabinet of 1934 compare with awards

⁴¹West. Andrew Fleming, *Presentations for Honorary Degrees in Princeton University, 1905-1925*, pp. 92-93.

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to the Coolidge Cabinet of 1924? Columbia and Harvard gave five honorary degrees to the men who made up the Coolidge Cabinet of 1924 but honored only one member of the Roosevelt Cabinet of 1934. The one degree was given by Columbia to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who is considered a conservative influence in the New Deal.

In 1838, Harvard bestowed an LL.D. on James T. Austin, Massachusetts Attorney-General who had praised the Illinois mob which killed Elijah P. Lovejoy, the abolitionist preacher and publisher. One hundred years later, a New England College gave honorary degrees to two business men who were descendants of Lovejoy. In speaking at the occasion, ex-President Hoover praised the abolitionist's sacrifice for freedom of the press. In 1922 Harvard gave an LL.D. to a Massachusetts attorney who soon after aided in the conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti. It may be wondered if, in the year 2022, a college will honor descendants of these men at a celebration memorializing the struggle for freedom of speech?

Lawyers, if we exclude holders of political office and professors of law, received a low percentage of the honorary doctorates after 1900. In the 1907-16 decade, Harvard honored four attorneys; Columbia, two; and the University of California, one. The University of North Carolina granted LL.D.'s to four lawyers in the 1919-28 period. During these years, Harvard honored two attorneys and Columbia, Wisconsin, and California each honored one. Five of Harvard's six lawyers were alumni as were the two honored by California and the one by Wisconsin. Two lawyers honored by Harvard and one of those given a degree by North Carolina were trustees of the institutions. Two of Columbia's recipients were trustees of institutions affiliated with Columbia.

At least two of the lawyers were members of wealthy families. Joseph H. Choate (LL.D., Columbia, 1916) who often represented the legal interests of the Rockefellers was the recipient of 15 honorary degrees. He was a vigorous defender of private property, and his efforts as counsel helped bring about the 1894 decision of the Supreme Court which declared the income tax law unconstitutional. He received honors from Harvard, Rutgers, Amherst, Yale, Union, and others, but none from state or public institutions.

The increasing control of higher education by business pointed out by Thorstein Veblen,⁴² J. E. Kirkpatrick⁴³ and other scholars, is reflected in

⁴²Veblen, Thorstein, *The Higher Learning in America, A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men.*

⁴³Kirkpatrick, J. E., *American College and Its Rulers.*

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the honorary degree policies of some of these institutions. The University of Wisconsin and Smith College were the only two of the seven universities in the decades studied which did not grant doctorates to bankers, industrialists, or other business men as such. These two institutions were probably most free of business control. However, several of the Wisconsin recipients had important business interests: Frank B. Jewett (Sc.D., 1927) classified as an electrical engineer, was vice-president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, and Governor C. C. Washburne (LL.D., 1874) had a hand in several industrial enterprises.

Before 1900, business men were seldom given honorary degrees. Only one, James Lenox (LL.D., Columbia, 1875) of all those studied before this date, was a book collector and philanthropist who had retired from business nearly 40 years before he received the degree.⁴⁴ In the 1907-16 period, approximately one of every 35 persons honored was a business man. This number increased so that one of every 12 in the 1919-28 period belonged to this group. Actually, business men made up even a larger part of the group than that; a number of those classified under other occupational headings were also bankers, industrialists, and corporation directors. For example, Andrew Mellon, who was one of America's richest men, was included in the political group because of his position as Secretary of the Treasury. Several of the editors were also heads of large publishing companies; and some of the lawyers, college presidents, scientists, engineers, and diplomats were also corporation directors.

Of the nine honorary doctorates given to business men in the 1907-16 period who were not included under other occupational categories, Harvard bestowed five, Columbia two, and North Carolina and California one each. John Pierpont Morgan, Sr., probably the most powerful banker of his time, was given an honorary LL.D. by Harvard in 1910. Horace Davis, a San Francisco manufacturer, was honored by both Harvard (1911) and California (1912). Theodore N. Vail, president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company and director of many other corporations, received Harvard's LL.D. in 1915. The names of almost all of these business men have appeared as contributors to Harvard in one or more of the annual reports of the treasurer of the institution. A. B. Hepburn, banker, given an LL.D. by Columbia in 1911, was one of the institution's financial supporters. The one business man honored by North Carolina was a trustee and benefactor of the university.

⁴⁴*Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 11, p. 172.

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Harvard, in the 1919-28 decade, gave more honorary degrees to business men than any of the other six institutions, and Harvard and Columbia together bestowed over twice as many doctorates on business men as the other five institutions combined. Harvard honored 13, Columbia and California six each, North Carolina two, and Nebraska one.

Following in the footsteps of his father, J. P. Morgan, Jr., accepted an LL.D. in 1923 from Harvard, and at least four other awards from institutions of higher learning. One of these awards, made by New York University, evoked the following caustic comment from John T. Flynn:

If you were such an imposing figure as J. P. Morgan, you not only could get almost any degree, but the chancellor or governors would not even ask you to call and get it. Ordinary millionaires were dealt with on the cash-and-carry system. They had to come and get their diplomas. But New York University gave a degree to Happy Jack Morgan in the middle of a term and delivered it to him at his own tradesmen's entrance. The Chancellor went down with his retinue to the Morgan menage in Madison Avenue, put on their holiday canonicals, then paraded across the library where they turned Jack into a Doctor of Commerce.⁴⁵

One of Morgan's partners, Henry Pomeroy Davison, was given an LL.D. by Harvard in 1919, by Columbia in 1920, and by six other private Eastern institutions. Robert Bacon and James J. Storrow of Lee, Higginson and Company were given LL.D.'s by Harvard. George F. Baker of the First National Bank of New York, who gave more than six million dollars to Harvard's School of Business, was awarded an honorary degree by that university in 1926. William P. G. Harding, banker and Governor of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, received two LL.D.'s in 1922, one from Harvard and one from Columbia. Owen D. Young, chairman of the Board of General Electric and a director of Electric Bond and Share Company, Adirondack Power and Light Corporation, and many other privately owned public utilities and industries, was given an LL.D. by Harvard in 1924 and by Columbia in 1925. He received 14 other honorary degrees, all from private institutions, before 1930.

Why did private institutions give a larger share of their honors to business men than did public universities? The greater dependence of the former on voluntary gifts for support may offer a partial explanation. Edward Stephen Harkness, who at the time of his death in 1940 had contributed more than ten million dollars to Columbia, received an LL.D. in 1928 from that institution. Harkness inherited his millions from his father, who

⁴⁵Flynn, John T., "Other People's Money," *New Republic*, July 5, 1933, p. 208. The degree was given in the 1920's.

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made a considerable fortune in Standard Oil. His gifts were undoubtedly a factor in making Columbia decide he was worthy of an LL.D.—although he was referred to as a "Man of Affairs" in the award citation. Such business men as Thomas W. Lamont (LL.D., 1932) and Albert H. Wiggin (LL.D., 1932) were also cited as "Men of Affairs" by Columbia. The citations usually mention only service and altruism, and not the success of the business men in accumulating large fortunes for themselves or, as Veblen said, that they "had the patience or astuteness to place themselves in the way of this multifarious flow of unearned increment, and were endowed with a retentive grasp."⁴⁶ Thomas W. Lamont's citation, for example, was finesse itself:

Always and everywhere patient, just, wise, far-seeing, and generous; eager in the support of sound public policies and of innumerable undertakings for the betterment of men; illustrating to the full the international mind tirelessly working in the practical service of his country and of all mankind.⁴⁷

The award of Doctor of Music on William Woodin by Syracuse University aroused this comment by John T. Flynn:

Syracuse . . . gave a degree to Mr. William Woodin, chairman of the board of the American Car and Foundry Company and, for the fleeting moment, Secretary of the Treasury. . . . However, the Doc got his degree not for his studies with the House of Morgan, but for his amazing achievements on the guitar. He was made a Doctor of Music. One can not help wondering, however, if Syracuse wanted to honor music and a musician and a composer, why it didn't confer a degree on Irving Berlin . . . or at least on the genius who wrote "Yes, We Have No Bananas," and why the University, when it sought a new Doctor of Music, chose a millionaire guitar player.⁴⁸

The two business men honored by the University of North Carolina in the 1919-28 period were a cotton manufacturer and Julian Shakespeare Carr, president of the Bull Durham Tobacco Company. Lucius S. Storrs, the one business man honored by the University of Nebraska (D. Eng., 1927), was an alumnus who became head of the New England Investment and Security Company and the Connecticut Company. Most of the six business men honored by the University of California were from the local state and included some of its richest men. Henry M. Robinson, banker and industrialist, was given an LL.D. in 1925. Henry E. Huntington, president or director of more than one dozen railroads and other corporations, was given an LL.D. in 1924, the same year that Ambrose Swasey,

⁴⁶Veblen, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁴⁷*Columbia Honorary Degrees, 1902-1932*, p. 161.

⁴⁸Flynn, John T., "Other People's Money," *New Republic*, July 5, 1933, p. 208.

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manufacturer and inventor of astronomical instruments, Banker Charles C. Teague, and William B. Storey, railway executive were honored.

State universities and colleges seemed to be less directly influenced by large business interests than were private institutions, although the influence of business groups in state institutions was strong. Professor Counts' study found that one-third of the trustees of 34 state universities and colleges were proprietors (bankers, manufacturers, merchants, brokers, etc.).⁴⁹ Professor Jerome Davis reported that over two-thirds of the trustees of more than a score of private institutions were representatives of big business.⁵⁰

Over 20% of the business men who received honorary doctorates from the seven institutions studied in the 1919-28 period were trustees of the conferring institutions. Less than four per cent of the other recipients were trustees. In general, business men received more honors from the private institutions. However, Smith College was an exception; it honored no representatives of business in the decades studied. On the other hand, the University of California, a public institution, surpassed Columbia in the proportion of honorary degrees given to business men. (California also had an even higher percentage of business men on its board of trustees than did Columbia.) The other three state institutions gave few honors to business men.

Few of the business men honored had scholarly inclinations or achievements. Some had acquired fortunes by methods considered by many as detrimental to the general welfare. Others came into the possession of great wealth by the accident of birth. Their financial power and monetary contributions to universities were probably the real reasons for the degrees bestowed upon them. The theory that honorary degrees are designed for academic accomplishments has hardly limited the number conferred on business men and other such non-academic occupations. But it has somehow barred labor leaders, farmers, and similar groups. Yet the achievements of a successful trade union official probably come as near to being academic as those of an investment banker or a corporation director —indeed, some would say that labor leaders have done more to promote the general welfare of the American people than have some of the business leaders who have been awarded honorary degrees.

The median age of the business men at the time they were honored

⁴⁹Counts, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁵⁰Davis, Jerome, *Capitalism and Its Culture*, p. 346.

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dropped from 70 years for the 1907-16 period to 61 for the 1919-28 decade. J. P. Morgan, Sr., received his LL.D. at the age of 73 but his son was only 56 when Harvard made him a Doctor of Laws.

Army and Navy officers have received few honorary degrees in peace periods, but during and shortly after wars their share has increased considerably. Of the seven institutions studied, North Carolina and Smith gave no awards to military figures in any of the periods covered.

Three of the 20 honors conferred by Harvard in the Revolutionary War period, 1776-1787, went to Generals Washington, Gates and Lafayette. In the peaceful years that followed, military men received few honors. No active Army or Navy officers were given degrees in the 1870 decade, although some former soldiers who had returned to civilian life, including General Grant, were honored. An award in 1871 to Major General Phil H. Sheridan evoked the following comment from Prof. Francis Leiber of Columbia University in a letter to Hamilton Fish:

I observe that Genl [sic] Sheridan has been made LL.D. by some Western College. You are not old enough to recollect that, in 1815, Wellington and Blücher received the doctorate from Oxford University. Some one said, "What did they make old Blücher doctor of?" I am not quite sure of what was the reply: at least, they made him doubtless Doctor of Canon Law.⁵¹

General William C. Gorgas and General George W. Goethals, who were more famous for their work in building the Panama Canal than for military achievements, and General Hugh L. Scott, better known as an expert in Indian lore than as a General, were honored by Harvard and Columbia in the 1907-16 decade. In contrast, in the years immediately following 1918, 11 doctorates were given to generals and admirals by these two institutions. Admiral William S. Sims was showered with degrees by Harvard, Columbia, California, and 11 other colleges in four years (1919-23). In 1919 General E. H. Crowder received degrees from Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, and Brown. He and Sims were recipients of LL.D.'s from these three "blue-blood" institutions at one commencement season. In England, during 1919, General John J. Pershing was given LL.D.'s at St. Andrews and Cambridge, and a D.C.L. at Oxford. When he returned to America in 1920, he accepted LL.D.'s from seven institutions, including Yale, Harvard, and Columbia. In a period of three years, he received a dozen doctorates in all. Marshal Ferdinand Foch of

⁵¹Original letter, Library of Congress. Fish MSS. Doctor of Canon Law was a degree, used little after 1800, which was given to religious scholars proficient in the laws (i.e., canons) of the church.

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France made a tour of the United States in 1921 and was weighted down with degrees. Columbia called a special convocation in order to make him a Doctor of Laws. It was in this connection that President Butler made one of the longest citations of his career—in the course of which he observed:

This University is a tried and trusted home of true patriotism, of lofty faith, and of noble ideals. It has taken part, honorable and distinguished part, in the war for American Independence⁵² and in the war for the preservation of the Union of American States. . . . The Great War whose storm clouds broke in the early days of August, 1914, came to us as a great shock. . . . Onslaught succeeded onslaught, and outrage followed outrage, until finally the patience of our liberty-loving people was exhausted and we took the place that God in high Heaven had kept waiting for us by the side of our Allies. . . . Columbia University hails in your person the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, the sober scholar who brought to the command of millions of men . . . and their strategy, not alone a vast knowledge but a firm character and an indomitable will. We rejoice to recall that when it was reported to you that the troops under your command were tired with their long and terrible exertion, you answered, "The enemy are more tired still. Attack!" That command was given not alone in the spirit of the military conqueror, but in that of the moral hero. . . .

For more than a century and a half Columbia University has called to its highest place of honor some of the great names of the world. It has never called a name with more gladness or with more pride, and it has never called a name that is likely longer to remain written on the scrolls of human history, than that of Ferdinand Foch, Marshal of France, whom I now admit to the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa* in this University, with all the rights and privileges that attach thereto.⁵³

There was a decline in the total number of degrees given in the war periods and a rapid increase in the periods immediately following. The alumni records of the leading institutions of the 1860's revealed this trend. Harvard, Columbia, the University of North Carolina, New York University, Princeton, Yale, and Dartmouth gave 70 honorary degrees in 1860. As the war drums were sounding in 1861, only 47 such awards were made. The number remained the same during the following year and fell to 40 in 1863; it increased the following year, and in 1865, the last year of the war, 69 degrees were conferred. In 1866, there were 82 honorary

⁵²The speaker failed to mention that Columbia, before the American Revolution when it was known as King's College, was controlled almost entirely by Tories, that the students and townspeople made President Cooper flee to an English man-of-war for protection, that the faculty and trustees and the recipients of honorary degrees before 1776 were nearly all opposed to Washington and what he stood for. What patriots there were were found in the student body.

⁵³*Columbia Honorary Degrees, 1902-1932*, p. 79.

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degrees given by these seven institutions. The Spanish-American War of 1898 produced a similar result. In 1896, 755 degrees were given; in the brief war period of 1898, colleges and universities reported only 632 recipients; but in 1899, 735 honorary degrees were conferred. In 1916, 825 honorary degrees were conferred; in 1918, when the nation's energies were bent on the defeat of Germany, there were only 736. In 1920, 989 honors were awarded; and in 1922 the number rose to 1082.⁵⁴

SUMMARY

The first three decades of the twentieth century saw a phenomenal development of graduate schools, a quadrupling of college enrollments, and a doubling of both the number and varieties of honorary degrees conferred.⁵⁵ However, for any given year, even after 1920, only about one-third of the liberal arts colleges and universities awarded any honorary degrees. After 1900, a larger proportion of honorary degrees were doctorates and a smaller percentage was given in the form of master's and bachelor's than prior to that time. The percentage of D.D.'s declined sharply while LL.D.'s, Sc.D.'s, and Litt.D.'s increased in popularity.

The trend has been to honor older men in the more recent periods. In general, the honorary degree recipients of Harvard and Columbia have been older than those of the four state universities. The median age of the recipients of the seven institutions in the 1919-28 period was 60 years compared with 54.3 years for Congressmen, and 51.2 years for 4000 persons covered for the first time in *Who's Who in America* for 1928-29.

Six of the institutions seemed reluctant to consider women eligible for honorary degrees. No women received honors from them in the periods before 1900. One per cent of their awards went to women in the 1907-16 period and four per cent in the 1919-28 period. In contrast, Smith College gave nearly 20% of its awards to men. Throughout the periods studied, women made considerable progress. By 1920, 17% of the in-course Ph.D.'s went to women and as early as 1900 over 30% of all college students were females.

Twenty-six per cent of the men and women in *Who's Who in America*, 1928-29, had earned doctorates, while for the 1919-28 period only 19%

⁵⁴Source of figures for 1896, 1898, 1899, 1918, 1920, and 1922 is the reports of the U. S. Office of Education.

⁵⁵Student enrollment in regular session in 1900 was 224,284; in 1930, 971,584. Number of different types of honorary degrees given in 1900 was 16; in 1930, 37. The individuals given honorary degrees increased from 701 in 1900 to 1,347 in 1930. All figures are from the U. S. *Office of Education Reports*.

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of the recipients of honorary degrees had earned doctorates. A study of 600 college presidents by Professor Luther E. Warren revealed that well over half of those without earned doctorates had honorary ones while less than one-third of those with earned doctorates had received honorary degrees. The present writer checked the earned and honorary degrees of 150 full professors at Columbia, Harvard, and the University of North Carolina and found a similar situation: 64.7% of those without earned doctorates had honorary degrees, but only 19.8% of those with earned doctorates had honorary degrees.

In recent periods, more and more honors have been bestowed on persons already honored. At Harvard and Columbia, where this practice has been most common, the majority of the recipients before 1840 never received another honorary degree; but in the 1919-28 years, over half of the recipients collected at least four awards and some had 20 or 30 such honors. College presidents were among the most frequent recipients. Those college executives honored by Columbia and Harvard in the 1907-16 decade gathered an average of nine honorary degrees per person. Presidents of the United States, from Lincoln to Franklin D. Roosevelt, have received an average of ten honorary degrees. As the recipient of 52 honorary degrees, Herbert Hoover probably has more such awards than any other man living or dead.

In general, the persons honored from the local state have included fewer important individuals than an equal number of recipients from outside the state—although the trend has been to confer a smaller share of the awards on local people. After the First World War, however, some reversal of this trend was evident when the number of local persons increased to about 40% of the total. On the other hand, an increasing number of awards—one out of every seven made by the institutions studied—went to foreigners. Columbia and Harvard gave the most honors to foreigners and the four state universities the fewest. Most of the foreigners were from the dominant European nations and those most friendly to the United States. During the American Revolution, Frenchmen were favored; before the First World War (1907-16) Germans came into first position; and after the war the English were the most popular. The isolationist sentiment following 1918 was reflected in the sharp drop in number of degrees to foreigners.

Church affiliation was found for about one-third of the recipients studied. At five institutions all were Protestants. The other two, Harvard and Columbia, awarded a few honors to Catholics and Jews in somewhat

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increasing numbers in the more recent periods. That only Protestants were found among the recipients of four state universities indicated the strength of the Protestant culture setting. On the other hand, at Notre Dame, a Catholic University, 25 of the 28 recipients in the 1919-28 period whose affiliations were found were Catholics. While religious influences on higher education were undoubtedly weaker than in former periods, the beliefs of the men in control were still reflected in the selections they made.

The political affiliation of the recipients often mirrored the attitude of the institution and the dominant traits of the local culture. At the University of North Carolina after 1860, with very few exceptions, the recipients were Democrats; while at California, Nebraska, and Wisconsin, practically all the recipients whose political beliefs were found were Republicans. The changes in different periods reflected, in general, the national political trends. No members of third parties (after 1870) were found. Politicians received about one-fifth of the honorary doctorates in all periods. Judges and diplomats were especially popular. The University of North Carolina surpassed by far the other six in percentage of honors awarded to this group.

Honorary degree committees also awarded a considerable proportion of honors to their own alumni, trustees and faculty members. The long-time trend has been to award a larger share to alumni and faculty members and fewer to presidents and trustees.

In the survey of the occupations of recipients the decline in awards to the clergy was most noticeable. College professors received an increasing percentage of honors up to the First World War, but took fewer awards in the post-war decade. College presidents, in proportion to their total number, exceeded all other occupations in all periods, and continued to take about one-tenth of all honorary degrees offered by the seven institutions in the post-war decade.

Scholars and scientists outside college walls began to achieve greater recognition in the early years of the twentieth century, taking about ten per cent of the honors in the 1907-16 period; but they received a somewhat smaller share (about six per cent) in the 1919-28 era. Medical doctors were given a few honorary degrees in all periods, ranging from seven per cent before 1787 to one per cent in recent periods. Honorary M.D.'s were a common award before 1860 at many institutions of higher learning.

The literary and fine arts were seldom recognized by the seven institutions before 1900. By contrast, about one of 25 in the 1907-16 years and

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about one in 15 in the 1919-28 period were from this group, which included writers, painters, sculptors, musicians, and actors. Columbia, of the seven, looked upon artists with the most favor. It also led in degrees awarded to editors and journalists; first honored in the 1907-16 period, they received about one of every 30 awards from the seven institutions in the 1919-28 period.

Business men, with one exception, received no honorary degrees in the periods before 1900. But in the 1907-16 years five per cent of Harvard's recipients and two per cent of Columbia's were business men. In the 1919-28 period the percentage tripled at the seven institutions and, except for Smith and the University of Wisconsin, continued to show gains in the post-war decade. Over 20% of the business men who were recipients in the 1919-28 years were also trustees of the conferring institution.

The awards to military leaders fluctuated with the war clouds. During the Revolutionary War years, about one of seven honorary doctorates went to generals, but in the peaceful 1830's and 1870's no such awards were made. Even in 1907-16, only one military leader was honored. In the post-war decade, however, the returning generals and admirals received more than a dozen honorary doctorates from the seven institutions.

These changes can be summarized briefly by presenting the probable occupational distribution of ten honorary degree recipients in two selected periods:

<i>Occupation</i>	1830-39	1919-28
College professor	1	3
College president	1	1
Clergyman	5	1
Scientist	0	1
Artist	0	1
Politician	2	2
Lawyer	1	0
Business man	0	1
	—	—
	10	10

Although honorary degrees are still considered as awards for scholarly achievement, they have, almost from the very start, been conferred for an unusually wide variety of reasons.



*"For a long and distinguished career, for your great
benefactions to the cause of higher learning, and for
not opening your trap to ask where your money went."*

Gardner Rea in the *Saturday Evening Post*, June 15, 1940.
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CHAPTER V

National Trends Since 1929

The preceding chapters have been confined largely to the history of honorary degree practices in seven leading institutions. A survey of practices in a large number of institutions in the 1930's, giving an over-all view of the contemporary situation and making possible a comparison of the practices in various sections of the United States, is the subject of the present chapter.

A questionnaire asking for information on honorary degrees was sent to nearly 500 college presidents. It was divided into three sections and requested the following types of information for the 1929-38 period: (1) figures on the conferring of honorary degrees, (2) the policies of each institution and (3) the personal opinion of the college president concerning the honorary degree system. The first section asked for the number of each kind of honorary degree the institution had conferred and the occupation, location, religious, and political affiliation of recipients. The second section sought information on the policies followed in selecting individuals for honorary degrees—particularly as to who made the selection, what data about a prospective recipient were collected, when the selection was made, and what limitations on the conferring of honorary degrees were observed. The third section asked for their candid opinions of the honorary degree situation in general. It included questions of this

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nature: What type of work and achievement should be recognized by honorary degrees? What are the defects and abuses? How can the system be improved? The presidents were asked to give their opinions about the general practices in the entire United States as they knew them and not about their specific institutions. The purpose of this procedure was to make possible candid and critical responses as well as evaluations of the same general situation. The presidents were also invited to add any pertinent comments they desired to make. The questionnaire was sent in whole or in part to 494 universities and colleges and 311 replies (63.0%) giving complete or partial information were received.¹ Some 269 college presidents (58.7%) supplied all or part of the information requested concerning their own honorary degree practices. To the questions involving personal opinion on honorary degrees in general, 266 of the 458 presidents (58.1%) replied. An analysis of the various data obtained is given in the following pages.

Two hundred and sixty-six institutions² reported that they had conferred 4,551 honorary degrees in the period 1929-38. This is an average of 17 honorary degrees for each college in the ten-year period, or 1.7 such honors annually. The 801 colleges and universities reporting to the U. S. Office of Education for 1930 conferred 1,347 honorary degrees, which is also an annual average of 1.7 per institution.

The number of honorary degrees granted individually by the 266 institutions was not uniform. Over 25% (67 institutions) gave none during this decade. At the opposite extreme, one institution bestowed 151 awards in the ten-year period. Only four colleges (1.5%) gave more than 100 such degrees. Twenty-four of the colleges, nearly one-tenth of the total, volunteered the information that no honorary degrees had been granted during their history. One Southern institution reported in these words: [Our] "college is very proud of the fact that in the 68 years of its existence, it has *never* conferred honorary degree." Sixty-eight institutions (26%) gave from one to nine honorary degrees in the ten-year period, an average of less than one per year. Forty-four colleges (17%)

¹At the outset, to determine whether or not the extreme length of the questionnaire would lower the percentage of response, 36 letters were sent out containing the first two sections dealing with local practice; 36 others were sent containing the third section relating to honorary degrees in general; and 36 were sent out which contained the entire questionnaire. Because of the response from those receiving the separate sections, the entire questionnaire was sent out to the remaining 386 institutions. Thus, the complete questionnaire was sent to a total of 422 college presidents.

²Three others reported on Section 2 but omitted Section 1.

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gave from 10 to 19 during the decade studied. Thus, over two-thirds of all the colleges studied gave an average of less than two degrees *honoris causa* per year. Only 7% of the institutions gave an average of five or more awards annually in the decade 1929-38.

Which types of institutions were the most prolific in bestowing honorary degrees? An examination of public, private, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Negro colleges and universities³ revealed that the private institutions were the most prolific donors, giving an average of 29 honorary degrees each during the decade 1929-38. The institutions classified as private include many of what might be called the "aristocrats" of higher education. At the opposite extreme, the Negro colleges averaged only five honorary degrees each in the ten years, or one every two years per institution. Public institutions conferred an average of 11 degrees each; Roman Catholic institutions averaged 12 each; and Protestant schools averaged 16 each for the decade.

Did the average Southern college give more honorary degrees than an institution in the Northeast? To compare the distribution, 250⁴ colleges and universities in this study were divided into three geographic sections based on Professor Howard Odum's classification:⁵ the Northeast, the South (including the Southwest), and the West (including the Middle States, the Northwest, and the Far West). Sixty-three of the 250 colleges and universities were located in the Northeast, 69 in the South, and 118 in the West.

The colleges of the Northeast conferred an average of 27 honorary degrees each. The Southern colleges conferred honors most sparingly, their average being 12 per institution for the decade. If the Negro institutions

³The classifications used are those of the 1939 *Educational Directory* of the U. S. Office of Education, Bulletin 1939, No. 1. Public means those controlled by state, county, city, or municipal government; private, those "controlled by a private corporation independent of church;" Protestant, those under the control of one or more Protestant denominations. The small group of 16 Negro colleges included in the study were not divided by type of control or otherwise, but were treated as a unit and thus were not included in certain comparisons based on these subdivisions.

⁴Negro institutions were not included.

⁵Odum, Howard, *Southern Regions of the United States*. The Northeast region includes the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The Southern division as used here includes two of Odum's regions, the South and Southwest, which comprise the states of Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The remaining states make up the third division used here and include Odum's three regions, the Middle States, the Northwest, and the Far West.

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were included, this figure would be even lower. The Western average was 16 per college for the 10-year period, which was slightly less than the national average of 18 per college.⁶

Honorary degree practices are considered by the regional and national accrediting agencies as one of many factors in determining the standing of an institution. This is usually not an important item in the final balance unless the degree policy is very bad. During the years 1929-33, 73 institutions were rejected by one leading regional accrediting association and low standards for conferring honorary degrees were factors which led to rejection in two cases.⁷ Since the accredited colleges⁸ are expected to maintain the standards set by accrediting agencies, it would be expected that such institutions would have higher standards for conferring honorary degrees than unaccredited institutions. However, on the criterion of number of honorary degrees conferred per college, a purely quantitative measure, the opposite was found to be true.⁹ The 51 unaccredited colleges gave an average of ten honorary degrees each for the period 1929-38 while the 199 accredited colleges gave an average of 20. The accredited institutions may have found recipients of equal or higher merit or men of greater fame and larger fortune; but if caution may be measured in numerical terms only, the unaccredited schools were more careful.

The institutions with enrollments of 1,000 or more conferred an average of 23 honorary degrees per college, while the institutions with enrollments under 1,000 averaged 16 each. The larger institutions, however, conferred fewer honorary degrees per unit of enrollment.

Women's colleges granted fewer honorary degrees than any other type of institution. The 32 studied gave only 94 in the 10-year period, an average of less than three per institution. Coeducational institutions and those for men gave seven times as many. Twenty-one of the 32 women's colleges gave no honorary degrees at all during the decade, while only one-fifth of the coeducational and men's institutions conferred no honorary degrees.

⁶The national average is 17 if Negro colleges are included.

⁷Zook, George F. and Haggerty, M. E., *The Evaluation of Higher Institutions*, Volume I, "Principles of Accrediting Higher Institutions," p. 56.

⁸Accredited institutions include those listed in the U. S. Office of Education *Educational Directory*, 1939, as accredited by national or regional agencies.

⁹The inadequacy of "number" as the sole criterion is, of course, recognized. For example, many smaller and unaccredited institutions may have been unable to attract able men. Possibly many more degrees were proffered than were actually awarded. Likewise it is possible for a college to give only one degree to a very undistinguished individual and for another college to give ten honors to outstanding men.

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VARIETY OF DEGREES CONFERRED

About 94% of all honorary degrees were doctorates, and 5.4% were masters'; the honorary bachelor's degree was almost non-existent. Four types of doctoral degrees—LL.D., D.D., Sc.D., and Litt.D.—made up 84% of all the honorary degrees conferred. Four other degrees—L.H.D. (Doctor of Humane Letters), M.A., Mus.D., and Ped.D. (Doctor of Pedagogy)—comprised 11% of the total. All eight degrees were given to more than 95% of all recipients. The remaining five per cent was divided among 46 other types of degrees.

The Doctor of Laws, given to more than one-third of all recipients, was the most frequently conferred. It was not confined to those in the legal or judicial fields but, in this period more than before, was conferred upon men of many different occupations. (A number of colleges gave no honorary degree other than the LL.D.) The Doctor of Divinity degree, conferred on over one-fourth of all honorary degree candidates, held second place. The LL.D. and D.D. degrees together made up two-thirds of the total honors. The former has been put to such comprehensive use that it alone could be used if the honorary degree were to be confined to a single type.

No other honorary degrees approached the LL.D. and D.D. in popularity. Considerably less popular was the Sc.D., which was conferred upon ten per cent of the total. The Litt.D. was fourth with eight per cent.¹⁰ In fifth and sixth places were the M.A. and L.H.D. with four and three per cent of the total.

The 46 other types of honorary degrees that comprised the remaining five per cent included a number commonly conferred as in-course degrees. Among these were the Bachelor of Arts, Master of Business Administration, Master of Fine Arts, Master of Laws, Master of Education, and the electrical and mechanical engineering degrees. Some of the rarer and more oddly named honorary degrees given during the period were: Doctor of

¹⁰An indication of the reliability of the data presented can be determined by comparing the percentages of the total number of individuals who received the LL.D., D.D., Litt.D., and Sc.D. with the U. S. Office of Education figures for the years 1930, 1932, and 1934. The reports of this federal agency are comprehensive and include nearly all the colleges and universities of the nation. Of the total honorary degrees given, the percentage receiving the LL.D. was 38% for this study and 36% for the Office of Education. For the D.D. degree, the figures were 28% and 26% respectively. The Sc.D. was given to ten per cent according to both sources and the Litt.D. to eight and nine per cent respectively. The approximate agreement of the figures of both sources indicates that the schools included in this survey were a representative sample.

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Oratory, Doctor of Education in Aeronautics, Bachelor of Sacred Theology, Master of Science in Military Science and Tactics, and Doctor of Philanthropy.

An analysis of the types of honorary degrees given by public, private, Protestant, Catholic, and Negro institutions shows that the LL.D. was the most popular among public and Catholic colleges, while the D.D. made up a larger share of the honors given by Protestant and Negro colleges. Accredited colleges gave a larger proportion of LL.D.'s and Sc.D.'s while the unaccredited ranked much higher in the use of the D.D. This is accounted for by the fact that 37 of the 51 unaccredited institutions were small denominational colleges which depended in a large measure on the churches of their area for support.

Little difference was found in the use of degrees in various sections of the country. The South tended to give more LL.D.'s and D.D.'s and fewer of the other types, while the Northeast conferred more Sc.D.'s and Litt.D.'s and fewer D.D.'s. In general, the Western institutions pursued a middle course.

Answers to the questionnaire revealed the place of residence for 3,902 recipients. Of these, 51% were living in the state in which the conferring institution was located, 45% were in other states, and the remaining four per cent were in foreign countries. If the group is studied on the basis of sex, no significant difference is found. The percentage of men and women from local states and other states varied by less than one per cent (local: men, 51.3%, women, 51.7%; other states: men, 45.1%, women, 46.0%); 3.7% of the men and 2.3% of the women were foreigners.

The grouping of the colleges on the basis of control reveals several marked differences. Catholic institutions paid special attention to local men, with 75% of their honors going to residents within the state. Protestant colleges gave 55% to local individuals, while both public and private institutions conferred the same percentage (44.8%) on residents from within the state. Negro colleges bestowed the smallest share (35.9%) of their honors on local men. The share given to foreigners was almost identical for all five types of institutions, ranging from a low of 3.37% for Protestant schools to 3.90% for public universities.

A total of 140 men and women (3.6%) from foreign countries received honorary degrees, but specific nations were reported in only 48 cases. Of the 48 individuals, 18 (37.5%) were from England; six (12.5%) were from France; and three (6.25%) were from Germany. This data

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indicates greater friendliness with England¹¹ than with France or Germany. It is possible that some of the German recipients were refugees; Thomas Mann, for example, has received honorary degrees from several American institutions. Six recipients from Canada were reported, five from the Orient, two from Africa, two from Italy, two from Hungary, and one each from Norway, Holland, Portugal, and Cuba. Recipients from the South American countries were quite conspicuously absent.

If honorary degrees are a means of increasing international good will, they seem to have been little used before 1939 to gain the friendship of our sister nations to the south.

Since 1940, however, the efforts of the United States, particularly of the State Department, in fostering closer friendship with the Latin American nations, have been reflected to some extent. During 1940-42, Columbia University made six awards to distinguished representatives of our neighbors to the south. In the course of the same period, the University of California honored two Latin Americans while Harvard and the University of Southern California each honored one. The five other institutions covered in this survey (Smith College, Yale, and the Universities of North Carolina, Nebraska, and Wisconsin) reported in December, 1942, that none of their honorary degrees awarded since 1939 had gone to Latin Americans.

It is significant that it was during 1941 and 1942 that nine of the ten degrees were conferred. Two of the awards (the LL.D. in both cases) were extended to Alfonso Reyes, Mexican diplomat and scholar, by the University of California in 1941 and Harvard in 1942. Late in 1942, Columbia University conferred the same degree on the President of the Republic of Ecuador, Carlos Alberto Arroyo del Rio. Of the other five to receive awards from Columbia, two were from Argentina and one each from Brazil, Peru, and Mexico—all diplomats and government officials. Octavio Mendez Pereira, a former President of the University of Panama was honored by the University of Southern California (LL.D. '41) shortly before he became a visiting professor at that institution.

Unfortunately, information in this connection is too scanty for definite conclusions. However, it is not without significance that an African was honored by a Negro college, that two Italians received degrees from Catholic institutions, and that most of the British recipients were honored by private colleges and universities.

¹¹Lynd, Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown in Transition*, p. 413.

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POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS OF RECIPIENTS

Political affiliation was reported for only about one of 20 recipients (248 persons). The party membership of many of the clergy and academic and professional groups was probably unknown to the colleges, and many preferred to make no report at all rather than give only a partial report. In the South, which is predominantly Democratic and includes many of the conservative elements of the party, nine-tenths of the recipients for whom this information was supplied were Democrats; in the Northeast, and even more so in the West, the overwhelming percentage of those reported were Republicans. See Table 5.

TABLE 5
POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS OF PERSONS WHO RECEIVED HONORARY
DEGREES, 1929-38*

Location of Institution	Republicans		Democrats	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Northeast	30	61.2	19	38.8
West	104	81.3	24	18.8
South	7	10.3	61	89.7
Total United States:				
1929-1938	141	57.6	101	42.5
1929-1932	72	66.1	37	33.9
1933-1938	69	50.7	67	49.3

*Conferring institutions were classified on a geographical basis.

Of the total of 248 persons whose party was given, all were Republicans or Democrats. No members of the Farm-Labor, Socialist, or other minority parties were reported. The view that liberals receive fewer honorary degrees in proportion to their abilities and attainments than conservatives seems to be supported by the little data here available. Among the recipients of the questionnaire were several institutions from Wisconsin and Minnesota, where the Progressive and Farm-Labor parties have been strong, but even these did not report any third party recipients.

For the entire decade, 57.6% of the total¹² were Republicans and the remaining 42.4% were Democrats. For 1929-32, when the Republican party was in power, nearly twice as many Republicans (65.5%) as Democrats (34.5%) received awards. Even in the Democratic regime in the 1933-38 period, the Republican recipients were in the majority, although

¹²Negro colleges reported the political affiliation for three persons, two Republicans and one Democrat, but the above figures do not include these colleges.

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by a much smaller margin (50.7%). The Republican party was, in general, more conservative than the Democratic in this period, and these figures lend support to the view that a larger share of honorary degrees go to conservatives.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS OF RECIPIENTS

In contrast to the meager information on the political affiliation of recipients, the church membership was given for nearly one-half of the entire group. The overwhelming majority (1938 or 88.3%) were Protestants, 11% were Roman Catholic, and less than one per cent of the total were of Jewish faith. The proportions were considerably different from those in the general population. According to the census figures for 1926, less than 60% of the 32 million church members of the country are Protestant. The fact that Protestants received nearly nine-tenths of the honorary degrees indicated that they are a highly favored group in this respect. Although the Catholics compose one-third of the church members of the United States, they received only one-tenth of the awards. The Catholic colleges made up about ten per cent of the total number in the survey. Thus the proportion of awards to this group was about the same as their proportion of colleges. The Jewish faith, which has over seven per cent of the church members in the United States, received less than one per cent of the honorary degrees. The fact that there are only one or two liberal arts colleges maintained by Jews accounts in part for this small number of honors.

The Catholic colleges gave four-fifths of their honors to their own church members. Private, Protestant, and Negro institutions gave less than one per cent of their awards to Catholics, which made the meager six per cent given by public institutions to this group loom large. These figures add pertinence to the remark of a president of a Catholic college who said: "We take special satisfaction in honoring a *Catholic layman*, especially if he is an *alumnus*, because Catholics have so little chance of being honored by a State University or Protestant College." Protestants received one-fifth of the honors at Catholic colleges, in contrast to the three-tenths of one per cent of awards made by Protestant colleges to Catholics. The Protestants also obtained the largest share at all other institutions, receiving all of the awards reported by Negro colleges to recipients whose church membership was reported and over 99% of awards given by Protestant institutions. The Jews received very few from any group but were

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given more awards by private institutions than they received from all other types combined.

Several Protestant colleges reported the number of awards made to the specific Protestant denomination which received the largest number of their honorary degrees. Those institutions gave a total of 450 honors of which 300 (exactly two-thirds) went to the members of the denomination which controlled the college. This is another manifestation of the very strong tendency of an institution to honor those who are most like the group which controls it.

AWARDS TO TRUSTEES, FACULTY MEMBERS, ETC.

This trend reveals itself also in the awards granted to alumni, trustees, faculty, and presidents. One-third of those honored¹³ by these institutions were their own alumni. Two hundred and sixty honorary degrees were granted to their own trustees. While a number of colleges gave no honorary degrees to trustees (some were restrained by specific rules forbidding the practice), other colleges took special delight in making honorary doctors of their board members. The most extreme example was a college which conferred 26 degrees during the ten-year period, of which 20 went to its own trustees. Although the faculty group outnumbered the trustees several times over, they received fewer honorary degrees from the institutions they served than did the members of the board. The presidents, who received 58 honorary degrees, actually fared better as a group, because of their much smaller numbers, than faculty members, trustees, or alumni. One institution whose by-laws forbade the conferring of degrees on those in active service gave a number of degrees to its faculty and trustees who had retired or had gone elsewhere.

Protestant colleges gave a larger share to their own alumni and trustees, while the public universities ranked first in the percentage given to their own faculty and presidents. Private colleges steered a middle course while Catholic institutions, followed by the Negro schools, gave the lowest proportion of their degrees to persons connected with the institution. The accredited institutions gave twice as large a proportion to their own alumni, and a slightly higher percentage to presidents, than the unaccredited, which gave a higher percentage to their own trustees and faculty. In general,

¹³The total referred to is 4,551 honorary degree recipients. This figure was derived from the first part of the questionnaire, which asked for the number of each kind of honorary degree (D.D., LL.D., etc.). As several colleges failed to report awards to alumni, the percentages given here are somewhat lower than in actuality.

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accredited colleges gave a larger percentage of their honorary degrees to persons connected with the institution than did the unaccredited, even though the latter were not required to meet the standards of an accrediting association.

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF RECIPIENTS

What occupational groups were most favored by the various types of colleges and universities? Public and private institutions gave about half of their honors to persons in academic or professional work. On the other hand, the types of institutions giving the lowest share to this group were Catholic and Negro colleges, which conferred one-fourth of their honors on individuals in this category. Negro and Protestant colleges gave the highest percentage to the clergy, while public and private institutions gave them the smallest share. Private institutions, which gave seven per cent of their honors to individuals in the arts, were the most generous to the artists. Catholic and public institutions had the greatest respect for politicians and lawyers. Business men fared the worst at Protestant and Negro colleges and best at private and public institutions. The farm and labor groups were almost entirely overlooked by all institutions. Army and Navy officers were nearly as neglected. Clubwomen received one more awards than did the farm and labor groups.

The questionnaire asked colleges to list men and women separately in the occupational classifications, but the space for the women was usually left empty. The 199 colleges and universities gave the occupational classification of 4301 individuals, of whom only 292 (6.7%) were women.¹⁴ If the 11 women's colleges that gave about four-fifths of their 94 honorary awards to their own sex are not included, those given to women fall to five per cent. This share is very meager in view of the fact that half the total population and more than one-third of the students, both graduate and undergraduate, in colleges and universities¹⁵ are women. In *Who's Who in America*, 6.26% of those included are women.¹⁶ and women make up ten per cent of the personnel of boards of education.¹⁷ The average college honorary degree committee is giving little encouragement to the women who are assuming responsible places in our culture. However, the

¹⁴In 1938, according to a survey made by the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, July 5, 1938, 9.6% of the honorary degrees went to women. This survey included 251 recipients, of whom 24 were women.

¹⁵Statistics of Higher Education, 1933-34, Bulletin No. 2, 1935, U. S. Office of Education, p. 50.

¹⁶Introduction to *Who's Who in America*, 1930-31 issue.

¹⁷Counts, George S., *The Social Composition of Boards of Education*, pp. 40-46.

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proportion of women given degrees was slightly higher than that included in the English King's New Year's "Honors List" for 1937; that list included 147 men as against seven women (4.5%).¹⁸

A comparison of the occupational classification of men and women recipients revealed that a larger percentage of women are in the academic and art fields, while men have a higher proportion in the fields of business, politics, and religion. Twenty-five per cent of all the awards given to women went to authors, artists, and social workers (approximately eight per cent to each group), while less than three per cent of the awards to men were given to recipients in these fields. It is a commentary on the continued repression of women that in fields such as writing and the fine arts, where sheer ability is the greatest factor in achievement, women make a larger proportionate contribution than they do in such fields as business and politics where other elements are of more importance to success.

The unaccredited colleges gave almost twice as high a percentage of degrees to ministers, missionaries, and other religious workers as did the accredited colleges, but gave a smaller ratio to other occupational groups. While accredited and unaccredited institutions showed great divergence in the occupations which they chose to honor, the colleges in various geographical groups showed considerable similarity in this respect. Northeastern colleges and universities were the first among the three regions in the share of honorary degrees given to the academic and professional group, politicians, editors, and businessmen, and last in honors given to clergymen. The South, on the other hand, surpassed other regions in the percentage of awards bestowed upon clergymen, but gave the smallest share to academic and professional fields. The West ranked highest among the three regions in the percentage of honors conferred on artists and lawyers, but gave the smallest share to politicians. The occupational groups selected, while not varying greatly in different sections of the country, probably reflect, to some extent, deep-seated sectional and cultural differences.

A breakdown in terms of smaller occupational categories reveals that the clergy received nearly one-third of all the honorary degrees awarded. In all but two classifications (women's colleges and public institutions) of the 12 sub-divisions into which the 199 colleges were divided, the clergy received more honors than any other specific occupation. Second to the clergy at all, except the Negro and Catholic institutions, were teachers and professors, who were given 13% of all the honorary degrees awarded.

¹⁸Figures from Wolf, Virginia, *Three Guineas*, p. 229.

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College presidents received only a few less honors than all other educational administrators combined (303 awards, 7.04% to the former; 359 awards, 8.35% to the latter). Some 199 colleges and universities bestowed 303 honorary degrees on college presidents. It should be noted that Warren's study¹⁹ of over 600 presidents revealed that less than half had received honorary degrees. Repeated awards to the same presidents accounted for a large part of these awards. At least 58 honors went to the man at the head of the institution bestowing the degree. Medical doctors and scientists each received about four per cent of all honors and both groups received their highest percentage (seven per cent) from publicly-supported universities and colleges. Judges received nearly one-third of the awards given to politicians and were the most popular on the commencement platforms of Catholic colleges, where the judicial group took one-tenth of the total honors conferred on all occupational groups. One of every 150 recipients at the 199 institutions was a banker, but the privately controlled colleges had one banker for every 97 recipients. Other business leaders and industrialists supplied one recipient for every 20 honored by the total group and one for every 14 of the private institutions. In contrast, only one of more than 2,000 was a labor leader. Farm leaders fared little better, receiving only one degree of every 600 awarded.

It is, of course, practically impossible to measure the total number of individuals with "achievements" worthy of honor in any given field. There may also be several times as many worthy individuals in one occupation as in another. Even so, the few degrees given to farm and labor leaders seems to indicate that outstanding worth in these fields is slighted in comparison with some in other non-academic fields.

The college presidents were asked what services or achievements they felt should be recognized in conferring honorary degrees. While 41% of those responding indicated that "achievement in business" should be recognized, 43% urged recognition of "achievement in the effective leadership of labor," and 44% thought "achievement in agricultural leadership" worthy of recognition. Yet the same college presidents reported that the institutions over which they presided gave 250 honorary degrees to business leaders, seven to farm leaders, and two to labor leaders.

The questionnaire left space for occupations other than those listed and the number of individuals given awards in these groups. Twenty-nine additional classifications were reported, the largest being social workers,

¹⁹See Chapter IV.

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which included 11 men and 24 women. Eleven librarians, six men and five women, were given honorary degrees. Eleven philanthropists, five archaeologists (including one woman), five men from the field of forestry service, three from the field of public service, three explorers, two nurses, two pharmacists, and two cryptographists were among those awarded honorary degrees. Occupations reported only once were aviator, dentist, industrial relations expert, chamber of commerce executive, and museum director.

In general, the academic, religious, and professional fields accounted for over 70% of all honorary degrees conferred by the 199 colleges and universities. Business men and politicians (including lawyers) received nearly 20% of the honors, leaving less than ten per cent for all other groups. When the eight per cent given to authors, artists (including musicians), and editors is accounted for, the remaining occupations (farmers, trade unionists, etc.) had two per cent of all the honors to divide among themselves.

How does the occupational distribution of the recipients of honors from the 199 institutions appear when set beside that of other comparable groups? First, the 199 institutions may be compared with the seven studied in the preceding chapter. The wide difference between the composition of the large group and the seven universities makes this primarily a comparison of an average group with a selected one, although part of the difference is accounted for by the fact that the degrees given by the seven institutions were granted in the years 1919-28, while those of the larger group were conferred in the next decade, 1929-38.

A noticeable difference between the two groups is in the share of awards given to clergymen. The seven selected institutions gave seven percent of their honors to religious workers, but 33% of the 199 institutions' combined honors went to this group. The academic and professional groups received 50% of the degrees of the seven universities compared with 39% for the larger group. The seven institutions gave more than twice as many degrees to holders of political office, but lawyers received a higher percentage from the 199 institutions. Business men, on the other hand, were given more attention by the seven institutions, which may be accounted for in part by the prosperity of the 1920's. Army and Navy officers received about nine times as high a percentage from the seven in the 1919-28 period, largely due to the chronological proximity of the first World War. Most of the degrees granted by the seven institutions to the military were conferred before 1923. Farmers, laborers, and their leaders

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were entirely absent from the seven institutions, and practically so from the 199 colleges and universities which gave nearly 30 times as many honors to business leaders as to farm and labor leaders. However, the occupational distribution of the 49 public institutions included in the 199 was remarkably close to the pattern of the seven in the 1919-28 decade.

Since trustees play an important part in the selection of honorary degree recipients, it perhaps is valuable to make a comparison of the occupational distribution of the two groups. Clergymen, business men, and lawyers dominated the boards of trustees of 13 Lutheran colleges.²⁰ How nearly the occupational distribution of these trustees is like that of all colleges cannot be stated, but it seems to follow the general pattern (except for the clergy) found in the 34 state colleges and universities studied by Prof. Counts.²¹

The share of clergymen receiving honors from the 199 colleges and those on boards of trustees was close (33% and 42% respectively). As would be expected, the academic group loomed much larger among degree recipients than on the boards. Lawyers and business men made up two-fifths of the trustee members and received over one-tenth of the degrees. In view of the nineteenth century tradition against giving honorary degrees to business men and the negative reaction toward business men in the 1930's, this share (6%) reflects the continued dominance of the business group in our society. It is large compared with the 0.2% received by farmers, laborers, and their leaders, who made up five per cent of the trustee group.

Individuals included in *Who's Who in America* represent a group of Americans selected for their achievement;²² honorary degree awards are usually thought of as going to more restricted fields. If we accept for purposes of comparison the occupational distribution of the new admissions to *Who's Who* as typical of the leaders of the United States, we can see what occupations in the honorary degree group exceeded or fell below the norm. Clergymen claimed a percentage of degrees more than twice that of their standing in *Who's Who*. The academic groups also exceeded in the degree

²⁰Leonard, R. J., E. S. Evenden, and F. B. O'Rear, *Survey of Higher Education for the United Lutheran Church in America*, Vol. I, p. 143 ff. (Survey made in 1926-27.)

²¹Counts, *op. cit.*, p. 57. Different occupational classifications prevent direct comparisons.

²²According to the editors of *Who's Who*, those included are selected because "of special prominence . . . making them subjects of extensive interest" or because of the official position held. (See p. 15, Vol. 17.) This comparison is based on 3,931 persons who had new sketches in the 1928-29 issue as reported in Vol. 17, p. 24.

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awards. Rather surprisingly, political figures made up eight per cent of the degree recipients but less than six per cent of those in *Who's Who*, even though many public officials are arbitrarily included in this volume. This may be due in part to the absence of a political upheaval in the two-year period before 1928. Such an upheaval would, of course, increase the number of new admissions based on official positions. Artists, journalists, lawyers, and business men made up a smaller percentage of the honorary degree recipients of the 199 colleges than of those newly admitted to *Who's Who*. These groups, lawyers excepted, received many more honorary degrees than they did before 1900.

SELECTION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The second section of the questionnaire asked each institution for information about the selection of recipients—who made the selection, and what limitations the by-laws and other official regulations of the college placed on the conferring of honorary degrees, etc.

One hundred and forty-three of the colleges and universities gave some information concerning the composition of the committee which made the final selection of recipients. Each institution was asked to designate how many of each of the following groups had a part in the final selection: trustees, president, faculty, alumni, and students. The combined membership of these honorary degree committees was 1653 of whom 821 (49.7%) were faculty members, 734 (44.4%) trustees, 90 (5.4%) presidents, six (0.4%) alumni, and two (0.1%) deans.²³ Thus, the average, hypothetical honorary degree committee had ten members including five faculty members, four trustees, and the president. Because of the great difference in the total number in each group, these percentages probably were not an accurate indication of their power in the choice of recipients. Since a college has only one president, he is usually outnumbered on the selecting committee but his influence in selection is probably as great, if not more so, than that of the faculty. Thus, while presidents made up only five per cent of the total committee membership, they were members of 66% of these selecting committees. Sixty-nine per cent of the committees had faculty members and 82% had trustee members.

The most frequent committee combination included trustees, president,

²³Several other colleges indicated by a check mark that the group was represented but did not specify how many. Approximately 170 colleges gave specific information on this item. Most institutions probably included deans in the faculty group since deans were not specifically asked for.

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and faculty representatives. This was the pattern in 33% of the institutions. Trustees and president made up the entire personnel of 20.2% of the committees, and trustees and faculty members did the selecting for 17.3%. These three combinations were used in over seven-tenths of the colleges. The trustees alone made the final selection in 8.1% of the colleges; the president with a faculty group comprised the committee in another 8.1%; the faculty had final choice in 7.5%; and the president had complete power in 1.2%. The remaining four per cent of the colleges had alumni representation in combination with one or more of the other groups.

While some institutions have placed upon the faculty all or part of the responsibility for choosing persons to be honored, the trustees in most colleges and universities play the dominant role in the selection. The conclusion that "as a rule the trustees wield the real power in the granting of honorary degrees,"²⁴ made by Professor F. L. Reinhold after a detailed study of the policies of liberal arts colleges, seems to be amply supported.

A number of college presidents explained their procedure in regard to selection of honorary degree recipients more fully than was asked for by the questionnaire. These comments, which came from less than one-fourth of all the institutions, probably represent, in most cases, explanations of the better practices. An attempt was made to divide the explanations into three classifications: those in which the faculty, the administration, or the trustees played a dominant or major role in selection.²⁵

The faculty seemed to have complete charge of the granting of honorary degrees at one university which stated, "Recommendation is limited to decision of Executive Committee of faculty; suggestions are welcomed from faculty members. The awarding of honorary degrees is a matter of faculty control." Another institution reported that "The General Faculty [including assistant professors and those of higher rank] of the University alone has the right to propose names to the Board of Trustees for honorary degrees" and went on to explain:

Some years ago, by approval of the Faculty, a joint committee of the Faculty and of the Board of Trustees was authorized to consider all names proposed for honorary degrees and to submit to the Faculty for final consideration the names of such persons as the joint committee approved. This report, which must include a full statement of the accomplishments of each person proposed for the honorary degree, after being read in the general faculty meeting, must lie on the table for not less than three

²⁴Reinhold, F. L., "Colleges and Honorary Degrees," *School and Society*, Vol. 37, p. 366. May 18, 1933.

²⁵In some cases the control seemed to be quite evenly divided between two or more of these groups; and the classification made here becomes arbitrary.

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weeks, after which it is considered by the Faculty in its regular meeting. While the report is on the table, any member of the Faculty may file objections to the awarding of any degree proposed. And these objections must be read in the meeting at which the final question of the award is taken up. If the Faculty votes to award the degrees, the names are then presented to the Board of Trustees for final action.

According to the plan followed by a western university:

Initiative for awarding honorary degrees rests with a committee of the Academic Senate which recommends to the President. He, in turn, makes his selections and presents the names to the Board of Regents for approval. The Committee is composed of persons representing varied fields of interest and no degree has been voted during my presidency except upon its recommendation.

The importance of having faculty members from several fields was stressed by the American Association of University Professors when it urged "regular rotation of representatives of different departments of investigation; the intent being that these should change from year to year."²⁷ But this recommendation, made in 1917, seems to have been ignored for the most part. In response to the item on the questionnaire, "If faculty members are on the honorary degree committee, are they changed regularly so representatives of different departments serve periodically?" 77 colleges answered. One-third (26) replied yes and two-thirds (51), no. Thus, in many institutions the same faculty members served on the honorary degree committee year after year.

At a midwestern institution, the deans selected the honorary degree recipients annually. The president stated:

At . . . this matter has finally been placed in the hands of a small committee consisting of the Deans of the several schools, seven in number. It is believed that such a committee can examine the cases presented more carefully and with fuller and franker discussion than was the case previously when this matter was handled by a committee of heads of all departments, about forty in number.

The plan followed by this university makes the faculty the source of all nominations for honorary degrees. "All nominations originate with faculty committee; names cannot go to Trustees until they have passed whole faculty after at least two weeks of study; they then go to Trustees Committee and finally to the whole board." One large university explained its elaborate process of selection as follows:

²⁷*Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, Vol. III, No. 9, 1917, p. 17.

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Each faculty during the fall and early winter collects the recommendations from the subdepartments. The larger faculties have Committees on Honorary Degrees; the smaller ones act as a unit. If suggestions come to the President, as they frequently do, from outside, they are referred to the appropriate faculty. The faculties, or the committees, reduce their recommendations to a reasonable number, which may range from none at all to a dozen apiece, after which they are sent to my office, sufficient copies being furnished to distribute to each member of the Committee on Honorary Degrees and myself. The recommendations may take the form of a *Who's Who* notice or a brief description, and they are very frequently accompanied by elaborate bibliographies. We ask that they be in my hands by the end of the Christmas holidays. I then distribute to the University Committee on Honorary Degrees the materials received. Each member of the Committee has a copy of everything. The meeting is usually held in January.

The Honorary Degrees' Committee reports first to the Program and Policy Committee of the University Council. This is a sort of symbolic action which takes the place of making a report to the entire University Senate. If approved, the recommendations are then presented to the Board of Regents for their action. The Board, as a matter of practice, does not vote honorary degrees which are not recommended through the faculty in this way, a very wise decision on their part for otherwise they would subject themselves to all sorts of pressure from outside. The Regents frequently, however, cut down the list submitted by the Committee on Honorary Degrees, though they do not add to it.

While the trend seems to be to transfer the actual selection of honorary degree recipients from trustees to faculty committees, several institutions explained that the trustees had complete or partial control. For example, one college stated that "the trustees may confer such appropriate degrees as they may determine and prescribe." Another reported these stipulations:

The Committee on Honorary Degrees shall consist of three members of the corporation, to whom shall be referred, for recommendation and report, all matters connected with the granting of honorary degrees. No honorary degrees shall be conferred except on the recommendation of this committee and only by two-thirds vote, by ballot, of the members of the corporation present and voting.

The trustees and the faculty jointly approved selection in a Southern college: "Nominees must be approved by a majority of the trustees committee and a majority of the faculty voting." A Western college stated that "final approval must be had by the Board of Directors with a majority of members present at the full meeting of the Board so voting favorably." The practice of a Midwestern institution is for the faculty to submit a list, with several times as many names as can be selected, to the trustees who make the final selections. Degrees are granted only to those who receive "favorable votes by three-fourths of those [trustees] voting."

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The influence of the president, directly and indirectly, officially and unofficially, is a much greater factor in the selection of recipients at most institutions than the influence of any other individual. The president may leave the matter in the hands of the chairman of a faculty committee or a trustees' committee, but these chairmen probably listen to the president's voice more intently than to any other. In many colleges the president is an ex-officio member of the board of trustees, and in nearly all institutions he attends trustee meetings and participates in their deliberations. As the link between faculty and trustees, his influence upon the faculty is unusually great. For example, the president of one institution acts with both groups in selecting recipients: "The President and Committee of Deans act on nominations that may come from any source. Then the President and our four trustees officially vote on the degree." At another institution: "The President gathers information concerning the prospective recipient and submits it to the Board of Trustees." A Northern institution stated that "Degrees are granted by the Board of Trustees upon nomination of a faculty committee of three, of which the President is Chairman." A large Southern institution explained: "Nominations are made usually by the President of the University, though not infrequently by members of the Board of Trustees, and quite infrequently by some well-known friends of the University."

How thoroughly does the honorary degree committee investigate a prospective recipient, and what data concerning him does the committee collect as an aid in making an intelligent decision? To throw light on this problem, the data sheets which were sent to college presidents included a check list through which they were to designate the one or more procedures that applied to their own situations.

The first item in the check list read as follows: "None. Each member of the committee does this for himself if it is done." Of the 170 colleges and universities that took cognizance of this list, nearly one-eighth (20) indicated that facts were not considered in advance and that the various members of the selecting committee used their own judgment as to the backgrounds of candidates. Many colleges, however, did collect certain facts in advance about each candidate. The most common type of information, which was gathered by seven-tenths (119) of the colleges, was a list of the books, articles, and scientific contributions of the person involved. Nearly two-thirds of the institutions (111) investigated the in-course degrees and formal education of the candidate. About three-fifths (98) indicated that membership in educational and scientific societies was

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ascertained. One-half (84) determined what honorary degrees the recipient had previously received, and about one-third (52) considered the age of the candidate. Sixty institutions reported that they investigated the business connections of candidates. Fifty-four stated that church membership was determined in advance, and four that the political affiliation was verified.

The check list included space for such other qualifications as a committee collected before making a decision. As a result, 100 "other qualifications" were listed by 71 college presidents. However, most entries referred vaguely to "service rendered," "notable achievement," and other equally ambiguous qualifications.

An attempt to group the various qualifications revealed that nearly half of them related to the service rendered by the candidate to society, church, science, state, or education. Typical pertinent responses were: "Contributions to the public welfare," "Public service in any field," "Service rendered to humanity," and "Signal contribution to society." Among the frequent responses were "Eminence in . . . religious world," "Service to denomination or society," "Christian character." As would be expected, such statements usually came from denominational colleges.

One-eighth of the responses indicated that general information was gathered. Two replies stated that it was of the *Who's Who* type. Typical responses in this connection were: "Complete informal information is secured," "All facts we can obtain," and "We examine his whole record." About one-tenth of the responses indicated that the place of residence of the recipient and his connection with the institution were considered. For example, one state university reported that "particular consideration was given to natives or residents of [the state]." Another emphasized "Connections with institution giving degree," and a third, "Meritorious service to institution." Less frequently mentioned were "Length of service," "Positions held, honors received," "Public recognition by worthy association," and "Prominent position."

In the entire group of colleges, there was little agreement as to what facts, if any, about the prospective recipient should be presented to the honorary degree committee. Nearly one-eighth of the institutions stated that no facts about the candidate were determined in advance, except what the individual members of the honorary degree committee may have gathered for its own use. A majority of the colleges reported that the scholarly qualifications as measured by books, scientific writings, in-course degrees, and formal education were investigated. How favorably the candidate had

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been treated by the honorary degree committees of other colleges and his membership in scholarly societies were factors in the decisions of about half of the institutions. The other qualifications which the colleges were asked to list were general and for the most part could be evaluated only subjectively. "Achievement," "Service," and "Contributions" were most characteristic of these answers. The reliance on the subjective and personal opinions of the committee members in selecting honorary degree recipients was indicated by the fact that less than five per cent of the colleges had definite forms for recording the facts which they attempted to collect in advance.

Several presidents made general remarks about the required qualifications such as the following:

It is a requisite that those who are honored shall have achieved distinction in public service.

In the selection of candidates, recognition should be confined to careers of scholarship, culture, notable public service, achievements exhibiting large intellectual powers, or outstanding expression of the high ideals of Christian character and service.

Distinctive public service should always be a large consideration. Some measure of scholastic, literary or scientific achievement is desirable.

All honorary degrees shall be awarded only in recognition of creative work, eminent scholarship or distinguished service in their respective fields, [from the by-laws of the institution].

The recipient must be a man of scholarly attainments as well as the highest integrity who has contributed signally to the *bonum Commune*.

Degrees should be conferred only where the act may be said to honor not only the recipient but the university as well.

A definite period of service was stated as a requirement by at least three presidents. "No honorary degree," declared one president, "shall be granted to any person who shall not have rendered at least fifteen years of service to his or her field following graduation from a regularly recognized college; or upon such a person or persons whose exceptionally meritorious service in their field shall entitle them to such recognition."

A Southern university listed the qualifications necessary for consideration for a D.D. or LL.D. as follows:

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF DIVINITY

1. Must be an accredited minister of the Gospel.
2. Must be known for scholarly work, that is, work that has received wide recognition because of its sound scholarship and the fact that it has added to some field of knowledge, or

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3. Must have done long and outstanding work as a pastor, teacher or writer, or
4. Must have rendered distinguished service in some field of religious or social activity.

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LAWS AND OTHER DEGREES

1. Evidence of unusually high scholarship in the field of research or publication, or
2. Long and worthy service as distinguished teacher or administrator in the fields of education, or
3. Valuable and constructive service in the field of business, statecraft, or religion.

In a denominational college where all recommendations for honorary degrees came from the faculty, the board of trustees, at the faculty's request, officially approved the following principles:

First, the candidate for such a degree should have achieved distinction in the field of scholarship so that his name on the list of honorary alumni would reflect credit on _____ College.

Second, the candidate should be one with sufficient culture so that the degree would not seem incongruous.

Third, the candidate should be outstanding in his Christian character and thus reflect the fundamental principles for which the college stands.

Fourth, if the candidate is an alumnus, there should be a natural relationship out of which the honorary degree might grow, for example, outstanding service in behalf of the college.

Fifth, the faculty may recommend for candidates those who have rendered outstanding service in the Kingdom of God.

Sixth, in order that the college may not cheapen itself by granting too many honorary degrees, we recommend to the faculty that in no single year should recommendations for more than two honorary degrees be made.

One of the older Eastern universities listed its "Standards to be Observed in Conferring Honorary Degrees" as follows:

LL.D.

1. Distinguished service to the state, to learning, or to mankind, coupled with—
2. Intellectual gifts and moral qualities which entitle the recipient to rank with men of culture and high principle.

D.D.

1. Distinguished services to Christianity or to Christian philanthropy beyond the limits of a single locality, coupled with—
2. Intellectual gifts, displayed either by writing or otherwise, which give the recipient rank with scholars and naturally suggest his recognition by a great University.

Litt.D.

1. Distinguished services to letters, art, music, or education, coupled with—
2. Intellectual and moral qualities which give the recipient place among cultivated gentlemen.

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D.Sc.

1. Distinguished services to science, coupled with—
2. Personal qualities and a kind of learning which entitles the recipient to recognition by a learned educational body of high standing.

M.F.A.

The Honorary M.F.A. degree should be limited to those artists and architects who have made a distinguished contribution to their respective arts, but in exceptional cases the honor may be extended to distinguished art collectors, art patrons, and museum curators or officials of institutions fostering architecture or art.

In one institution the trustees' committee on awarding of honorary degrees made a very detailed report in response to the writer's questionnaire. This report stated that in the past the honorary degrees conferred by the institution had gone largely "to those who have attained distinction in government, education, or the ministry," and suggested that in the future "there should be more evidence of our interest in and appreciation of achievement in science (including medicine), literature and the arts (including music, painting, sculpture, and the dramatic arts)." The committee decided not to limit degrees to a definite number but stated, "In general, we would advise fewer rather than more awards." It preferred giving honors to those "who are in the midst of their work" rather than to "those whose careers have been rounded out." The committee urged that the institution "avoid honoring well-known figures" who had already been showered with honorary degrees and that honors should not be given "primarily on the ground of political or professional position."

The presidents were asked in the questionnaire to list limitations which the by-laws, charter, and other official regulations of their institutions placed on the conferring of degrees. One hundred and seven institutions gave some answer to this question, of which one-half (53) stated that no limitation existed.

The limitations which were listed by the colleges differed widely. One university reported: "Honorary degrees are against our regulations." Some related in detail elaborate sets of rules and limitations. Others cited a charter clause stating that the university could confer "all such honorary degrees as usually are granted and conferred in any of our colleges . . . in America." One college reported that candidates "must have recommendation of committee on honors." Many institutions included as limitations the practices, traditions, and methods and general principles which were observed.

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A number of presidents indicated the types of candidates they preferred. Typical comments were:

First consideration should be given to graduates of _____, then to ex-students of rare achievement, then to others.

Special attention should be directed to the discovery of worthy alumni.

We prefer to honor our own alumni so far as this is possible.

Have almost always limited our grants to graduates of _____ of twenty-five years standing who have achieved distinction in some field.

One institution stated that it attempted to limit its honors to students and ex-staff members as a means of cutting down outside pressure:

The . . . Committee has adopted the policy of restricting nominations for honorary degrees to those who have been connected with the university in the past as students, members of the staff, or members of the Board of Trustees. In all cases, members of the staff or of the Board must have severed their connection with the university in order to be eligible for nomination. This policy has relieved the pressure to a considerable degree.

One president stated his position as follows: "If the honorary degree is to retain its significance and meaning there should be, in my judgment, some special association between the recipient and the awarding institution."

Local individuals were the first choice of several institutions. One president commented: "Distinguished persons in the city should be considered." Another president explained his position in these words: "Since . . . is a municipal institution, it has become a traditional policy to choose candidates who have some special significance to the community. The degree is not conferred usually *because* of this local significance; local significance is merely our way of making the preliminary 'screening' of eligible candidates."

A college in the Northwest reported: "Residence and work in the Northwest should be a factor, but not essential." A Northern college stated that a prerequisite of its honorary degrees was a bachelor's degree. College graduation was stipulated by several institutions.

Another institution explained in some detail its position in regard to alumni and the "home folk":

Except in the case of unanimous faculty nomination, the committee shall consider only those nominees who are included in one of the following groups:

(a) Alumnae and alumni of _____ and others who have been closely connected with the work and history of the institution.

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(b) Residents or former residents of the State of _____ who have rendered outstanding public service.

(c) Persons who have rendered outstanding public service which has definitely and especially affected the State of _____ or _____ College.

A Protestant college stated: "We invite distinguished churchmen and laymen for Commencement addresses and usually confer the honorary degrees on them." A Catholic institution with a similar custom commented: "It is our custom to confer an honorary degree upon the speaker at the commencement exercises and upon the preacher at the Commencement Mass."

Thus, persons who have had some connection with the college and who live in the area served by it are looked upon favorably by many institutions. If a university were choosing one of two individuals of equal achievement for an honorary degree, the alumnus would probably be selected rather than the non-alumnus. In some colleges, however, if the non-alumnus had remarkable oratorical abilities, he might be chosen and asked to give the commencement address.

While certain groups were looked on with favor by the honors committee, there were others to whom it refused, or was reluctant, to grant degrees. Many of the statements indicated that an institution's own faculty and trustees in active service were ineligible. One college was reluctant to confer the first honorary degree on an alumnus of another college: "The nomination for the first honorary degree should be made by the Alma Mater of the nominee if that institution is within reasonable distance." Several colleges made statements such as these:

No person who solicits a degree is considered.

Any extensive propaganda or pressure in favor of a person by his friends will disqualify him for corroboration.

There should be no pressure from the outside.

The fact that such rules are necessary indicates that organized campaigns by the friends of a nominee are by no means extinct. The following pertinent comment was made by one college president: "Letters are received yearly from persons desiring such degrees, but no such personal request has ever been granted."

There is some indication that colleges are becoming more reluctant to honor their own faculty or trustees. While, as discussed earlier, many colleges and universities reported giving honorary degrees to their own faculty, trustees, and presidents, at least 12 institutions volunteered the information that they discourage or even forbid the practice. Of the insti-

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tutions conferring honorary degrees, only about two-thirds reported granting them to their own faculty or trustees, and, in many cases, these went to individuals who were no longer in active service. An institution which had conferred over one-fourth of all its honors on trustees announced: "This year, practice of recommending honorary degrees for members of Board of Trustees discouraged. Faculty members are not recommended." Several institutions reported that faculty and trustees were barred:

Trustees and faculty of our own institution debarred.

No degree granted to local staff, faculty, or trustees.

We have stipulated that these degrees should be awarded to no one connected with the college as student, trustee or regent.

Only faculty and trustees who were no longer in active service were eligible in several colleges. ("The College does not confer degrees upon members of its own Board of Trustees nor upon members of its faculty except upon retirement or [in three cases] when they have resigned to take other positions.") Cases of long service and advanced age were made the exception by several institutions. ("No member of the faculty, the Board of Trustees, or any officer of . . . should be nominated by the faculty for any honorary degree except in cases of long service extending to advanced age.")

Mechanical limitations were reported by some institutions. Thirty-nine listed a general or specific numerical limitation (including 20 institutions which conferred few or none). Several institutions reported that honorary degrees had been conferred during the decade but indicated that recent policy was to grant none. One institution reported that the "number shall be rigidly restricted," but failed to explain how. Another stated its limitation in very specific terms: "The maximum number of honorary degrees granted shall be two in one calendar year, and 20 in any ten consecutive years. Faculty amended this to make five in any year."

Most of the colleges listing a specific numerical limitation of one or more degrees provided for exceptions. Of the 16 colleges giving a definite maximum, four stated that two honorary degrees per year was the limit, while the upper limit for others varied from one to eight degrees. However, many of the limitations included exceptions such as "except for extraordinary reason," "except by full vote of board," and "except in very unusual circumstances." One institution was limited to "not more than one degree of a kind in any one year," a limitation which would depend for its effectiveness upon how many of the 50 or more types of honorary

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degrees the institution conferred. Another limited "the number awarded on any one occasion to four," which would make the maximum allowed per year depend upon the number of commencements, founder's days, alumni festivals, building dedications, and other "occasions." In general, there are few definite and rigid limitations in regard to the number of honorary degrees conferred per year; many limitations include exceptions which nullify the restriction in whole or in part.

Nine of the other limitations given were general statements to the effect that a few honorary degrees had been bestowed but that the practice was discouraged. For example, one university stated: "We are not favorable to the conferring of these degrees in the future except under extraordinary cases," Another said: "There will be few honorary degrees granted from now on. He or she will have to be so unmistakably deserving of the degree (such as it is) that there will be no question about it." A third college explained a parliamentary procedure it used to restrict the number of degrees conferred:

The honorary (degree) Committee is on the table by action of the Board of Directors. This is to avoid granting degrees if possible. If one is suggested by the Chairman, consideration can be moved to take off the table the prohibition of granting an honorary degree and allowing the name to come up after a year of investigation. This is to avoid free granting of honorary degrees.

This college seemed to have achieved its purpose. It gave only one honorary degree in ten years. A Western college which gave only four honorary degrees in ten years stated its policy in these words: "General understanding: Give very few honorary degrees and *none* for political reasons." A Northern college which had conferred no degrees in ten years made this statement: "We do not favor the conferring of honorary degrees in any numbers. We perhaps would offer to confer one for outstanding scholarship to one who has no earned degree." Ten other institutions stated that it was against their policy to confer degrees *honoris causa*. A college which gave two degrees in the preceding decade reported: "A rule [had been] adopted by the Board of Directors that no honorary degrees be given in the future." One large state university reported that it had "a rule (twice violated in its history) that it will confer no honorary degrees." A Northern denominational institution replied rather emphatically that it "has never conferred any honorary degrees and has no present intention of changing this policy." A Western university explained how its policy had been determined:

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About two decades ago inquiry was made of many of the leading universities as to their experience with honorary degrees. As a result of this inquiry it was decided not to make it a policy at _____ to grant such degrees. A number of universities granting these stated that if they could drop the custom they would be glad to do so.

Another Western university gave its record and policy very briefly: "Policy is against it."

Two presidents who had discontinued the practice of granting honorary degrees when they came to their respective institutions reported: "I have opposed the granting of honorary degrees in the institutions with which I have been connected. None have been granted at . . . since 1935." The other stated:

The policy of the present administration of _____ is to grant no honorary degrees. Considerable pressure has been felt during the past three years but so far we have resisted it and I anticipate there will be no problem in years to come. Personally, I feel that state colleges and state universities, particularly, must be careful in granting honorary degrees. The potentialities of political pressure are always present.

A Southern college decided that not even for its one hundredth birthday should it break its rule of awarding no honorary degrees. The president wrote:

During our one hundred and two years, our institution has conferred only A.B. and B.S. degrees. At our Centennial two years ago, very careful consideration was given to our policy. It was decided, however, to continue our practice of giving no honorary degrees.

Limitations as to the types of honorary degrees conferred were outlined in some cases. Two institutions stated that the master's degree was not granted, but one hastened to add "but [we] feel the need of a degree lower than the doctorate." Other colleges stated that no degree ordinarily conferred in-course was conferred as an honorary degree. Two institutions explained:

Only the degrees of D.D. and LL.D. may be granted *honoris causa*.

By charter permitted to give following degrees: D.D., LL.D., Litt.D., Sc.D. (Honorary).

There seems to be a trend toward requiring the recipients of honorary degrees to call for their diplomas in person. Six institutions stated that they did not confer degrees *in absentia*. Typical comments were:

Candidates for honorary degrees shall appear in person to receive the degree.

We never give an honorary degree *in absentia*.

Honorary degrees are not conferred on persons who do not attend commencement and receive the degree in person.

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Nearly half of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's honorary degrees were bestowed upon him *in absentia*. In 1941, Oxford University awarded a degree to him *in absentia*. Not only was he not present at the ceremony, but the ceremony took place at Harvard. This seems to be an instance where the university was *in absentia* as well as the man.

Ninety-eight colleges and universities reported that their honorary degree recipients were selected before a definite date each year, while 58 institutions had no definite date. Twenty-five of the 98 waited until May or June to make selection. Thus, 53.2% of these 156 colleges either had no definite date for making the selection, or, if they did, it was only a few weeks before commencement. The remaining 71 institutions decided who the recipients were to be before the first of May of each year; more specifically, 22 set a date in April as the deadline, 17 in March, 16 in February, and three in January. Four had their final decisions made by December of the previous year, four others by November, while another had the recipients selected by October. Three institutions made it a practice to choose the honorary degree recipients one year in advance. The college which selected its candidates farthest in advance made its choices two years before the commencement at which the honors were to be conferred.

There are, of course, exceptions which reduce the effectiveness of the rules. For example, one institution stated: "The regular rule is for the candidates nominated for honorary degrees to await action for one year, though this rule can be suspended by unanimous vote of the trustees and action taken at once." Less than one-third of the colleges required selection to be made by or before April 1, and only 13 of the 156 institutions required the selection to be made before the January preceding commencement.

In general, only a minority of the colleges and universities conferring honorary degrees have well-defined rules of procedure in written form. The trustees, for the most part, select the candidates with no restrictions other than their own consciences.

THE VIEWS OF COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

The presidents of institutions of higher learning were requested to state their frank opinions of the honorary degree system. To encourage candid responses, they were asked not to criticize or defend the practices of their own institutions but to give their opinions concerning general practices in the United States. Nevertheless, some of their statements made it plain that they were defending the policies of their own institutions. Asked if it

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was true that honorary degrees had been given by colleges primarily for self-advertising, several replied "Not here," or "Not at this institution." Likewise, when they were queried as to whether they would consider it an improvement to limit definitely the number granted annually, they frequently added comments about their own policies, such as "We give only four or five" and "We do."

Nearly 75% of the institutions administered by these presidents had granted honorary degrees in the preceding ten years and most of them naturally had the bias that one has when he is asked to analyze critically a procedure in which he has taken an important part. While some stoutly defended the practice, others revealed a highly critical and objective attitude.

To make it less time-consuming for those answering the questions, and to facilitate the tabulation of the returns, the questions in this connection were set up with two or more answers to each item so that the preferred response could be checked. However, since most of the questions involved "Yes" and "No" answers, there was no opportunity for qualifying the answers or indicating emphasis as to the positions taken, except as comments were written in. One president stated, "I have answered all questions by a straight yes or no, but would like to state that some of these answers are unqualifiedly so, but others are somewhat qualified." Another wrote: "It is hard to answer some of your questions without reservation." Others ignored certain questions or added explanations. Undoubtedly, all the presidents did have various shades of opinion which the specific responses did not measure. However, the clear-cut choice made it possible to obtain a good deal of definite data.

Three questions concerning the number of honorary degrees given were preceded by the following statement: "The colleges and universities of the United States confer about 1,200 honorary degrees annually. For any given year, only about one-third of the degree-conferring institutions grant one or more honorary degrees." The first question asked was: "Would you prefer that the colleges and universities give more ____; same ____; or fewer ____ honorary degrees?" Of the 241 who responded to this question, the vast majority (184 or 76%) preferred that the number be reduced. Fifty-four (22%) were content to maintain the status quo, and only three preferred that more honorary awards be given. One of the latter advanced the opinion that "when given on merit, they are better than degrees received from credit courses." Among the qualified responses was that of a president of a small college who checked "same" for universities

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but preferred "fewer" honors be granted by colleges. Several presidents who did not check any of the responses made the following typical comments:

No preference.

Not informed.

More for some institutions, fewer for others.

Which colleges?

Not more.

The problem is not one of number but caliber of recipients.

One president indicated he would prefer that fewer degrees be given but added this pertinent remark:

I do not know whether too many honorary degrees are given or not. I feel that a good many are given which are undeserved. Perhaps there might be an equal number of deserving men and women who ought to be recognized.

While over three-fourths of the college presidents preferred that fewer honorary degrees be conferred annually, only a small minority wished to see honorary degrees abolished entirely. In response to the question, "Would you prefer that no honorary degrees be conferred by any institution?" only 28 presidents (10.9% of those answering) checked the affirmative. Even most of the presidents from the institutions which had dispensed with honorary degrees answered no to this question. On the other hand, more than half of those who would abolish honorary degrees were presidents of institutions which did award them.²⁸

One president who responded in the affirmative stated: "This is my general answer in regard to the honorary degree problem." Two others answered in the affirmative, but added these reservations: "If all agreed to the practice," "Or very rarely." Several who answered negatively made comments such as these: "Think some are worthy," "Few, and then only for very outstanding service and late in life."

In response to the question "Would you consider it an improvement to limit definitely the number of honorary degrees granted in any one year by an institution?" 213 (83.5%) of the 255 presidents who answered said yes. Several qualified their responses by adding comments such as "Ex-

²⁸Seven were from institutions which gave no honorary degrees, seven from colleges for whom the number bestowed was not known, and 14 were presidents of universities and colleges which gave an average of 21 honorary degrees for the period 1929-38. Three of these 14 conferred 75, 55 and 48 awards respectively during the decade.

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cept on special occasions" and "With exceptional events." A few administrators who answered in the negative added these comments:

Each institution should have a limit which would be adhered to, except on special occasions of academic celebration, when a slight increase might be justified.

Certain years, anniversaries, etc., would interfere with such a law.

There might be an occasion when you might desire to confer more.

In contrast were these vigorous comments by two presidents supporting their affirmative answers:

By all means. They should be few.

Decidedly. Some institutions lower the dignity of honorary degrees by the plethora of them given each year.

One president who checked yes suggested a way to determine the limit: "For example, a proportion between honorary degrees and earned degrees." Other administrators took the opportunity to explain that they did have a limit.

That a definite limit should be placed on the number of honorary degrees conferred annually by an institution was overwhelmingly favored. Over three-fourths of the presidents preferred that fewer honorary degrees be given than have been conferred in recent years.

Two-thirds of the presidents felt that honorary degrees are bestowed too largely for practical or administrative success, but only one-third favored limiting the degrees exclusively to persons making outstanding academic and scientific contributions. This can be interpreted to mean that most administrators would like to see fewer degrees go to non-academic persons, but are reluctant to see such persons eliminated entirely.

One hundred and sixty-two presidents (67.5% of those answering) said yes to the question: "Do you feel that honorary degrees are conferred too largely for practical or administrative success rather than for achievement in scholarship, science, and the arts?" Several who replied in the affirmative added comments such as: "These are statements of fact prevailing in many institutions but not all, and point out some of the chief evils of the system in practice." Another thought too many were given "for financial reasons too." One of three who replied in the negative made this remark: "I believe practical success should be the basis for men who have at least a bachelor's degree."

When asked "Would you favor limiting honorary degrees to persons making outstanding academic or scientific contributions?" only 35% answered yes (81 yes; 152 no). Two qualified their agreement by adding

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“Or educational administration” and “Usually.” The comments of some of those who did not favor limiting degrees to academic and scientific fields suggested broadening the fields: “Would allow for success in public affairs and business,” “Any great contribution.” Two presidents indicated they would like to include other achievements if honorary degrees were more definitely distinguished from in-course degrees.

Ten types of achievements were listed in the questionnaire and the presidents were asked to answer, by checking yes or no, whether or not these achievements should be recognized by honorary degrees. Of the 266 who returned the questionnaire on opinions, 233 checked all or part of these ten items. All but two of the 233 agreed that achievements in scholarship and science should receive consideration. The percentage of those favoring the recognition of the various types of achievement in order of their popularity is given in Table 6.

TABLE 6

OPINIONS OF PRESIDENTS OF 266 COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AS TO WHAT ACHIEVEMENTS SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED IN CONFERRING HONORARY DEGREES

Achievement Fields

	Yes	No	Omitted
Scholarship and science	86.8	0.8	12.4
Art, music, <i>belle lettres</i>	83.5	2.3	14.3
Educational administration	83.1	2.6	14.3
Social service	73.3	7.9	18.8
Religious lines	70.3	9.0	20.7
Agricultural leadership	44.0	21.4	34.6
Effective leadership of labor	42.9	24.1	33.1
Leader in the cooperative movement	37.2	24.1	38.7
Leader in business	40.6	28.9	30.5
Leader in politics	38.7	33.5	27.8

In the case of all ten fields, more presidents supported the claims to honors than opposed them. However, some marked several fields yes and omitted the remainder—indicating, perhaps, that they considered the others of dubious worth. While 233 answered the question concerning achievement in scholarship and science, only 174 stated definitely their position in regard to agricultural leadership. Academic, artistic and literary achievement were opposed by fewer than three per cent, while less than ten per cent wanted outstanding leaders in social or religious work barred from receiving awards. Achievements in the more practical fields—agriculture,

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labor, cooperatives, business and politics—had the active support of less than 45% of the presidents. When persons from the fields of business or politics (agricultural, labor or cooperative leaders very rarely receive degrees) are given honors, there seems to be a tendency to stress in their citations any scholarly or social contributions they may have made. The ability to build a vote-getting machine or a profitable business is usually ignored.

The comments made by some of the presidents revealed their personal views in more detail. In regard to the fields outside the academic and artistic one president wrote: "These might well be recognized in unusual instances—unless we can invent a baronetcy," which suggested that he held the view that honorary degrees are an American substitute for titles of nobility. Another president expressed this idea more directly: "Since we do not have 'orders' like other countries, the honorary degrees take the place, to a certain extent, of these honors."

A president of a state university answered no for all fields except science and scholarship, but approved the others when coupled with outstanding academic achievements. A president of a northern college answered yes in regard to the five practical fields but added the comment typical of several: "These services, to be worthy of an honorary degree, should not be merely attainment of financial success or wide notoriety, but should be such constructive contributions to social programs as to mark them off definitely as extraordinary." Several men indicated that it was the extent of achievement rather than the field which should determine the selection of recipients. Characteristic comments were:

Merits of case should determine.

Achievement is the word—in line that is with the American Scene. Letters, literature, professions, industry.

Any public or private achievement if very outstanding and if coming after achievement has been well and permanently established.

Several presidents made the following remarks in response to the question on recognition for achievement in labor, agricultural or cooperative leadership:

Not degrees, but some kind of recognition.

Outstanding constructive leadership of any kind. Yes.

Special degrees should be developed for those.

Not at present.

Less than 40% thought achievement in politics worthy of recognition

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by honorary degrees. If the term "government service" or "statesmanship" had been used, the percentage would undoubtedly have been higher. Eight presidents answered yes, but added the word "statesmanship"; others crossed out the term "politics" and wrote in "statecraft" or "Public Service." Business, like politics, was approved by approximately two-fifths of the presidents. Their comments on this question included the following: "If socially of pre-eminent worth," "Sometimes," "With qualifications," "Rarely," "Perhaps, in rare instances," "If special degree."

In response to a suggestion that they list other fields of achievement which they considered worthy of honorary degrees, several presidents listed definite fields, some of which could have been included in the ten fields mentioned. The following are typical of the variety of fields suggested: law, philosophy, mother or home, achievement in teaching, newspaper service to the public, achievement in diplomatic service, exploration, possibly dramatics, long and conspicuous military service (e.g., Pershing), invention (e.g., Edison), motion pictures (e.g., Disney), aviation (e.g., Lindbergh), etc. Some of the more general types of achievement mentioned included:

Living a cultured life.

Any line of endeavor of value to mankind.

In any essentially benevolent or philanthropic service.

Distinguished community service.

Contributions and leadership in his field.

Whatever may make a man's life worthy of such an honor.

We feel a recipient should be judged along general lines, that is, an outstanding contribution, within the territory the school serves, for any one or more of the above.

Whatever genuinely promotes the common welfare in an unique degree or manner.

Peculiarly valuable service to the granting institution.

The vagueness of these statements would make it possible to include almost all occupations. "Any line of endeavor of value to mankind" would certainly include digging ditches and baking bread. These broad generalizations, which reflect the policies of honorary degree committees, probably encourage laxness in conferring awards.

Several made comments to this effect: "With sufficiently broad definition of the above [the ten fields listed] they probably cover the field." One head of a college which had given only one honorary degree in the ten years, who had indicated by his answers that he thought only academic,

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artistic and religious achievements should be honored, wrote a vigorous "None" and went on to say "Why should labor agitators be honored? Why should any profit-making enterprise be considered at all?" He then proceeded to relate how one institution had abused its honorary degree privilege: "I know a college which awards on an average of six or seven honorary *degrees* each year when its scholastic standing is below accreditation. What is such a degree worth?"

"Do you think that each institution should set up definite requirements and standards to determine who is eligible for consideration for honorary degrees and who is not?" This question was checked affirmatively by nearly four-fifths (78%) of the presidents responding. However, their answers to related questions, as well as their replies in regard to present practices, indicated that they were reluctant to face the implications of their own views. Replies to other questions indicated that the majority would not bar specific occupational fields from eligibility for degrees. Of the ten fields, ranging from leadership of labor and business to scholarship and art, none were actively opposed by more than 35%.

Typical comments of those answering yes to the question regarding definite selection standards included:

But only of a very general nature.

To some extent.

But not too rigid or mechanical.

Broad principles.

These comments indicated that many who answered yes actually did not want specific standards. Other observations made by those who omitted the question or who answered negatively were of a similar nature:

My answer is No because I think it is impossible to adapt an iron-clad standard that would meet the possible future requirements.

Definite requirements not possible.

Excellence of candidates precludes necessity of such a tape measure.

Too mechanical.

Waste of time.

"Do you think, other qualifications being equal, persons with extremely conservative social views are more apt to be given honorary degrees than extreme radicals?" To this question 185 presidents (82% of those responding) said yes while 40 (18%) said no. Many of the supplementary statements were illuminating. "I should hope so," was the comment made by one president and "Unfortunately, but not always" was the remark

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of another, which left no doubt about their relative social opinions. "Depends on the college" was typical of many responses.

Asked if they felt there was validity to the assertion "that honorary degrees have been given to popular favorites primarily to advertise a college and bring it free publicity," 113 presidents (61% of those responding) said yes while 73 (39%) said no.

"Do politicians holding high public office sometimes bring pressure to bear on honorary degree committees to secure degrees for a favorite?" To this question 87 presidents said yes (50.3% of those responding), while 86 (49.7%) said no. They were also almost equally divided when asked the same question about business leaders. Eighty-nine presidents maintained that business leaders did wield pressure; 84 (46.6%) denied that they did. The majority (71.1%) clearly indicated that the clergy brought pressure to bear on the honorary degree committees.

Fifty-six per cent of the presidents of public institutions thought politicians used pressure, but only 47% of the Protestant college presidents agreed with them. On the question "Do business leaders bring pressure," 59% of the public group and 49% of the Protestant group answered yes. The latter overwhelmingly agreed (80%) that church leaders sought honorary degrees. Somewhat smaller was the percentage of administrators of public institutions holding similar views (62%). Both groups agreed that church leaders exert more pressure than either business leaders or politicians.

Thirty-six presidents indicated that, at least as far as their own experience went, there was little pressure from the aforementioned groups. However, some made remarks which indicated that they thought pressure was brought to bear in a greater or less degree. "Of course," said one president. More typical replies were "Probably to some extent," "These situations sometimes develop," "Occasionally only," "I am a novice, but I understand they do."

Is the attainment of an important position sufficient reason for granting an honorary degree? To obtain information in this regard the college presidents were asked to answer yes or no to the following: "Persons are sometimes given honorary degrees on attaining high office in state or church. In your opinion, is this practice desirable in the case of persons who would be passed over if they did not hold such office?" Sixty presidents (27.8%) made an affirmative response, while 156 (72.2%) thought the practice undesirable. Several who answered affirmatively qualified their answers: "In some cases," "Occasionally," "The degree may be mer-

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ited because of such achievement," "If they hold such office competently." Two presidents who responded negatively supplemented their answers by these statements: "No, if the question means the possible injustice done those of merit who do not attain such office" and "Why should this be done? Frequently there is no academic background."

"It is frequently remarked that college presidents dislike the honorary degree system because of the hard feelings engendered in persons passed over by the selecting committee. In your opinion does this exist? Not at all _____. Some _____. Considerably _____. One hundred and seventy-two presidents (76%) checked "Some." Over twice as many (17%) agreed that this feeling existed "Considerably" as thought that it did not exist at all (7%). A president of a college which had never conferred an honorary degree stated, "I do not know from personal experience, but I hear, *considerably*." Another president did not answer but indicated that the feeling existed by explaining, "The higher the standards concerning honorary degrees, the less the feeling."

The responses indicated that the presidents felt that abuses would be eliminated if the local institution did not confer honors on its own faculty, trustees, or administrative officers. Seventy-two per cent stated that abuses would be eliminated if members of the local faculty were not given honorary degrees. Seventy-one per cent felt the same about trustees and administrative officers. However, only 35% agreed that denying honorary degrees to their own alumni would eliminate abuses. These answers reflect, to some extent, the policies of those institutions with rulings forbidding the granting of honorary degrees to faculty, members, trustees, and administrative officers in active service. "Some abuses might be eliminated, but I can see where some unfairness, even injustice, might be worked if those three groups were ignored," declared one president. "Merits of case should determine—not a blanket rule," said another. "These measures," remarked a third, "would not eliminate all the abuses and they might bring on some others." Several presidents acknowledged that abuses would be eliminated if the alumni were not honored, but added these comments: "However, I would not favor ceasing to honor alumni," "But not sufficiently to justify discontinuance of the practice," "But better do it." Another president, speaking broadly, asked: "Why refuse to do something wisely because of some other person's folly." Indicating that he thought giving degrees to local faculty members led to abuses, one college president showed his intense disapproval of this practice by saying: "Horrible to do so." One Northern university president stated that he thought that honor-

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ing trustees led to abuses, but that honoring administrative officers would lead to no abuses. A president who made a negative answer added: "The practice of honoring a member of the staff or of a board of trustees should be carefully restricted, but not completely abandoned."

The presidents indicated that they had more confidence in the faculty selections than in those made by any other group. They were asked: "Which group, in your opinion, would make better selections of honorary degree recipients (Check): Faculty ____; Administration ____; Trustees ____; Alumni ____?" Of 238 answers, 30% said faculty, 20% administration, 8% trustees, and 2.5% alumni. Nearly seven-tenths of the presidents preferred that the faculty or administration, or the two combined, should pick the persons to be honored. More than one-third of the presidents checked two or more groups. When the replies in which more than one group was checked were included, the percentage of the presidents favoring faculty participation in the selection was 64%, administration 53%, and trustees only 27%.

When asked whether they would favor limiting the conferring of honorary doctorates to institutions conferring in-course doctorates, 24% of the presidents replied affirmatively and 76% negatively. Significantly enough, 36 of the 57 presidents favoring the limiting of honorary doctorates to institutions conferring in-course doctorates were the heads of small colleges which seldom offer courses leading to doctorates. Because there are more small colleges, however, a higher percentage (30.0%) of the larger colleges actually preferred this limitation than did the smaller ones (21.2%).

In this connection, one president wrote: "If there were any limitation on institutions conferring in-course, Yes. As it is, No." Another said: "Yes for D.D.'s," while another disagreed, saying: "Certainly not for D.D.'s." A president of a small Western college explained his position:

I do not feel that some really great colleges which limit themselves to undergraduate work or at most to the granting of the master's degree should be barred from conferring honorary doctorates in every case. One hardly needs to add that the conferring of honorary doctor's degrees by tiny colleges which have hardly a master on their force has in it an element of the ludicrous not to say the ridiculous.

The president of a small Northern college expressed this opinion:

We feel that universities regularly conferring in-course doctorates should be able to confer certain specially named honorary degrees, i.e., D.Sc.; LL.D., and no others. We feel that colleges of less than a thousand students should confer nothing

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higher than an honorary Master's degree and this should be specially designated so as to be recognized as such. Would it be possible to institute by general agreement a "D.Hon." and a "M.Hon." for honoraries?

"If honorary degrees are given, would you prefer degrees whose names would clearly distinguish them from in-course degrees?" That question was received unequivocally. Ninety-three (93.4%) per cent answered yes and only 6.6% no (241 yes; 17 no). While the overwhelming majority of presidents indicated they desired different degrees for in-course and honorary purposes, many reversed themselves when asked to apply this principle in specific situations. For example, over 33% stated that they preferred to have the doctor of science degree conferred both for honorary and in-course purposes. Only 31% stated that they would favor that the title of doctor be reserved solely for in-course degrees and such terms as "Public Benefactor" or "Distinguished Scholar" used in the place of honorary degrees.

The present honorary degrees are extremely confusing to the general public and even to graduate students and educators. The writer asked 104 nurses in training at a large metropolitan hospital to tell which of four degrees were usually earned and which awarded for honorary purposes. These nurses were all high school graduates and several were graduates of liberal arts colleges. All of them knew that the Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) was an in-course degree, but 82% thought the Doctor of Laws (LL.D.), the most common honorary degree, was also in-course. The popular honorary degree, Doctor of Divinity (D.D.), was thought to be an in-course degree by 72%. The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), the most common academic in-course doctorate, was said to be honorary by 31% of the group. The nurses knew, of course, from their association with physicians and internes that the M.D. was earned by long years of study. It seemed to them that if the Doctor of Medicine is the in-course degree for physicians, then it was logical to assume that the Doctor of Laws is the in-course degree for lawyers, and the Doctor of Divinity the earned degree for ministers. Those who thought the Ph.D. was honorary may have reasoned that the term Philosophy is so broad and inclusive that it would be suitable for an honorary degree.

As a further check on how well people distinguish between earned and honorary degrees, 40 graduate students, most of them doctoral candidates with considerable experience in educational work, were asked to classify certain degrees as in-course, honorary, or both. Seventeen of the 40 thought

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the most popular of honorary degrees, the LL.D., was either in-course or given in both categories; only 12 of the group correctly identified the D.D. as honorary; and eight of the 40 thought the earned Ph.D. (the degree for which most of them were working) was given both as in-course and honorary. Only seven of the 40 knew that the M.A. (the fifth most popular honorary degree) was given *honoris causa* as well as in-course. The honorary Mus.D. was classified correctly by only one-fourth of the group. All of the graduate students classified the B.S. and B.A. degrees correctly as in-course but of the remaining ten degrees,²⁹ 22 of the 40 failed to classify five or more correctly.

Queried on the same points, thirteen college and university faculty members, representing six different institutions, also made many errors. Five thought the common honorary degree D.D. was an in-course degree, and five others classified it as both. The LL.D., which is the honorary degree often given to faculty members, was mistaken by only two of the 13. All but two of the group were Ph.D.'s but two (and they were Ph.D.'s themselves) thought the Ph.D. was both honorary and in-course. The M.A., which is both in-course and honorary, was misinterpreted by six who thought it strictly an in-course degree. The Doctor of Education degree, which is also both in-course and honorary, was misinterpreted by eight of the 13 who thought it was in-course only.

If faculty members and graduate students, whose work is closely related to degrees, are unable to distinguish honorary and in-course degrees, it is small wonder that the general public thinks that the Rev. A. M. Good, D.D., and Professor I. M. Smart, LL.D., came by their degrees through years of formal studies.

Obviously some drastic changes are necessary if honorary degrees are to be easily distinguishable. The suggestion by one college president that the word "honorary" be made part of the name of the degree would achieve this result. Thus, all honorary doctorates would be called simply "Honorary Doctor" (or perhaps the Latin equivalent) for which the abbreviation is "D.Hon." An honorary master's degree would similarly be "M.Hon." However, just adding the word "Honorary" or the abbreviation "Hon." to the usual degree would probably not prove entirely satisfactory, since some persons would simply omit the "Hon." One president who suggested a plan similar to the above saw the difficulty:

²⁹LL.D., LL.B., D.D., B.D., Mus.D., Sc.D., M.A., Ph.D., Ed.D., and Litt.D.

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How would it do to mark all honorary degrees with an "H?" Or even "H.C."—*honoris causa*? Then we could use the same run of degrees, but with a clear designation. In that case the bachelor's and master's degrees would be unobjectionable—B.A.H., M.A.H., Ph.D.H., etc. There might be a temptation to omit the "H."

Another method of distinguishing the two would be to reserve for in-course degrees the terms bachelor, master, and doctor. As early as 1900 a president of Brown University suggested that academic degrees and such terms as "doctor" be limited to scholars, and that non-academic achievements be recognized by such terms as "master of affairs," "guardian of the state" or "benefactor of the republic."³⁰

Nearly seven-tenths of the college and university presidents, however, indicated that they opposed "reserving the title of doctor solely for in-course degrees and using such terms as 'Public Benefactor' or 'Distinguished Scholar' for honorary degrees." It should be noted that at least part of the opposition was to these specific titles rather than to the plan of using doctorates solely for in-course degrees. Comments indicated this opposition:

If terms were not so clumsy.

Not these titles.

The former is now given by Chambers of Commerce, Luncheon Clubs, etc. Why emulate them?

Think you could find better titles than the ones suggested.

A president who was very critical of the honorary degree system triple-checked the "Yes" on this question and added, "If new initials were adopted like 'Public Benefactor' to be used as 'honorary degrees' (which I am inclined to believe in), it would make a difference in some of the replies I have made on other items." The president of a Western college explained in these words: "If there were names that would definitely distinguish the honorary from the in-course, I should like that better."

This problem was also approached from another angle by asking the presidents: "Which of the following degrees would you prefer to have conferred only as in-course degrees, only as honorary, and as both in-course and honorary?"

In general, they were much less anxious to transfer the in-course degrees to the honorary category than to transfer the honorary degrees to the in-course classification. Only one president would have the bachelor's de-

³⁰The suggestions were made by President W. H. P. Faunce of Brown University in response to a plan to create a new degree, "Doctor of Arts," for business men. *Educational Review*, Vol. 20, p. 534. December, 1900.

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gree or the M.D. degree other than in-course, and less than five per cent wanted the Ph.D. to be other than in-course. Although LL.D. and Litt.D. seemed to be the most stable honorary degrees, one-fourth of the presidents would be willing to have these conferred in-course. Only 30% would keep the Mus.D. strictly honorary, and 40% would be willing to see the D.D., one of the oldest of the honorary awards, conferred in-course.

Those degrees which are now commonly given both as in-course and honorary would be put strictly in the in-course classification if the wishes of the majority were followed. The master's degree, which is frowned upon considerably as an honorary degree, though still often given, would be strictly an in-course degree if 86% of the presidents had their way. Two presidents preferred to see the Ed.D. discontinued altogether. Thirty-three per cent would follow the present practice of giving the Sc.D. as both in-course and honorary, and 40% would prefer to have it given only in-course. Two presidents remarked in regard to these degrees: "Never as both in-course and honorary," "Never in both." This represents the predominant feeling, since the percentage wanting any of these ten degrees given both in-course and honorary ranged from a high of 33.3% to a low of 0.4%.

What were the candid opinions of college and university presidents concerning the honorary degree system? To secure their "off the record" remarks they were sent an additional sheet entitled "Additional Comments and Opinions," with the following explanation: "Please use this page to make any additional statement or remark regarding the merits and demerits, the benefits and evils of the theory and practice of bestowing honorary degrees in the colleges and universities of the United States."

A number of those who praised the conferring of honorary degrees expressed the opinion that the good practices of some institutions should not be overlooked:

I believe very firmly that there is a very distinct place for the awarding of honorary degrees in our American colleges. . . . It enables the college to recognize in its formal capacity distinguished services rendered to the state, community and church. . . . In the present campaign that it seems is being waged against honorary degrees I feel that the practice of good institutions of long standing should have considerable weight.

* * *

Properly considered, the granting of such degrees is not only justifiable, but desirable, but there must be great care and the utmost of independent consideration to each individual candidate. There should be few if any restrictions upon the institu-

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tion granting such a degree. The whole idea as I understand it is to recognize real distinction and no two persons ever reach such distinction by the same approach. . . . There is entirely too much ironclad management of the college curriculum. In later life there should be none. The person who has in his own way arrived at a well merited success in his own field may very well be recognized by a good college.

* * *

There is a place for honorary degrees if they are given sparingly and to worthy men and women. It would be a mistake to limit honorary degrees solely to those who have gained academic distinction but certainly the institution is regraded when men or women are honored who have not enriched the national or the truly cultural life of the country.

A fellow administrator defended the practice but recognized the danger of abuses:

The positive values in conferring honorary degrees are to be found in the fact that they are a suitable recognition of outstanding work in education, religion, citizenship, or as a matter of fact, in any other capacity.

I have no doubt that there are abuses in the conferring of honorary degrees. We have tried to eliminate such abuses as much as possible by demanding that requests for honorary degrees should come not from the prospective candidates but from others who are well acquainted with the candidate, but have not as far as we know, in any sense conferred with him regarding this matter. . . .

I favor continuing the practice of conferring honorary degrees under the proper safeguards, and the most careful scrutiny of the administration and the faculty of the college conferring the degree.

Another college head pointed out the value of honors in encouraging service to the community:

The bestowal of an honorary degree is an excellent way of showing publicly approval of merit. I think a college or university has an obligation of recognizing the cultural, literary, scientific, social, educational, efforts of any man or woman within the limits of the area it serves, who has unselfishly devoted himself or herself to an ideal. Sometimes such a public recognition is all the approval received. If we are to encourage men and women to do things to help raise the cultural level of their community, we must recognize their efforts, as well as their accomplishments. No organization is better fitted to give that recognition than the college or university; and the honorary degree is the means.

Personally, no degree should ever be granted to help the college or university itself. That is a defilement of power. All benefit of a degree should fall upon the recipient. Hence I feel that there is danger of, if not actual abuse, when a school goes far from its boundaries to bestow a degree. Such men or women as mentioned above are not plentiful within a college constituency and consequently the degrees granted will be few.

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The value of honorary degrees as peace time honors was emphasized in this statement:

Although all Americans are pacifists in at least some degree, we honor only *war service* [sic]. About the only recognition given to *service in Peace* is given by educational institutions, chiefly by their Honorary Degrees. We should stress the honoring of *Peace Service* in every way possible. Military service is necessary but must destroy property and human lives to serve us. Peace service is constructive, it *builds*. It should be encouraged.

Several presidents pointed out that the value of an honorary degree depends upon the character of the granting institution. The following statements are typical:

The degree value is determined by the distinction of the institution conferring it. Those who know institutions know the value of the honor; for the rest, it doesn't matter.

* * *

It's a poor business in many places but a real honor when well done.

While many presidents made no statements under the heading "Additional Comments and Opinions," of those who did, over twice as many made critical remarks as made favorable ones. Typical of the shorter criticisms were these:

I feel very strongly that many institutions are acting unwisely in the granting of honorary degrees.

In my opinion it's a harmful practice.

The giving of honorary degrees has become a kind of racket in some institutions. Too cheap now.

While the questionnaire did not refer to the commercialization of honorary degrees, the most frequent criticism made in these general comments involved this abuse. Several presidents wrote as follows:

I am very much opposed to the commercialization of honorary degrees. In other words, the conferring of these degrees with the expectation of receiving benefactions seems to me undesirable. In the past, there has been considerable abuse of this academic function, although I think the situation has improved in recent years.

* * *

Many honorary degrees are granted to persons who make gifts to colleges. Others are granted to persons who are friends of those who may make gifts to colleges. Still others are granted to friends of board members or friends of the president in return for some personal service. Such degrees are a discredit to higher education and every effort should be made to reduce the number of such degrees to a minimum.

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I am not much in favor of honorary degrees. They are too frequently given as a means of "buying" influence or of securing financial aid.

* * *

Not much value because so many are given in U. S., and many of these are evidently for the sake of material returns.

* * *

I would judge that some institutions grant honorary degrees largely to obtain influence for promotional purposes. I have turned down scores of requests to consider such possibilities. A less conservative person might not. I do believe there is lack of criteria on this subject.

* * *

First, I definitely hold that the conferring of Honorary Degrees has been subject to some terrible abuses. In too many instances the individual is not honored, rather the institution has used this as a means of publicity, acquiring prestige, so it thinks, from the individual supposedly honored.

Further, I believe Honorary Degrees should be few and far between and should be conferred only for some outstanding contribution, particularly of an academic or intellectual nature.

Two presidents of denominational colleges commented that ministers were often persistent in seeking honorary degrees:

Especially in these church-related colleges is the D.D. a problem. . . . The brethren will get much of the "smell of the earth" in their nostrils and want honors. . . . I suppose like athletics and many other things it comes down finally to the conscience of the institution, those in charge to decide.

* * *

I believe ministers are perhaps the most insistent seekers after honorary degrees, and one has only to look around him to see examples of those who receive such degrees but do not deserve them. . . . "Doctor" is losing its significance. Pretty soon, if those whose duty it is to protect this honor do not protect it, many good people will spurn the title and lose respect for many institutions which confer it. Perhaps they do now.

Several presidents stated that too many honorary degrees are given, especially by small colleges:

It is my personal opinion, and this opinion is also shared by a large number of our trustees as well as the faculty, that colleges and universities have been altogether too free with their honorary degrees. I think this criticism can be made more directly toward the smaller colleges than toward the larger colleges or universities.

* * *

In general, too many honorary degrees are granted by small colleges. The development of a citation for conspicuous service instead of a degree would in my judgment be desirable.

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I feel that it would be better if no honorary degrees were granted, at least by the smaller institutions. Yet it may be necessary to do so in our case in order to compete with other institutions who give the degree for political reasons.

Honorary degrees should have a definite limitation in proportion to the number of graduates in course.

* * *

We believe that American colleges and universities have grossly over-worked the honorary degree of privilege. It has been my observation that honorary degrees are usually conferred upon individuals who have not, and probably could not, attain a high academic degree. Then, too, the ones who are usually honored in such manner are men and women who, because of their positions, and social, financial, and political standing, might be made friends of righteousness through the unrighteousness of mammon.

One of the most renowned college presidents, David Starr Jordan, summed up well many of the thoughts expressed by his colleagues:

The main purpose of a university is training, and its various degrees are essentially certificates of the amount and nature of its training. An honorary degree is, even at its best, something quite different—a tribute to character, education, or achievement outside the academic walls.

The objections to the practice of conferring such an honor lie largely in the ease with which it is abused. The degree of LLD. falls often to individuals of merely temporary prominence—politicians, officials, or headliners of the press—or to a merely wealthy man from whom possible gifts may be expected.

Some institutions have granted the degree *ad nauseam*, others very rarely, and a few, notably Cornell and Stanford, practically not at all. Some limit the title to those who have had, in one way or another, an integral relation to the institution concerned. Still others have recognized mainly presidents of sister universities, especially when they have been called in as commencement "orators." At the fiftieth celebration of the University of Wisconsin, each department chose from its colleagues in other institutions some professor it delighted to honor. But great is the outside pressure on officials of universities granting honorary degrees, the weight of the persistence being usually in inverse ratio to the fitness of the candidate proposed.³¹

³¹Jordan, David Starr, *The Trend of the American University*, pp. 80-81.



"Psst—put away that check for the endowment fund until AFTER you get the honorary degree!"

Lichty in *The Fraternity Month*, Jan., 1939. Reprinted by special permission.

CHAPTER VI

Vox Populi

In the final analysis the usefulness of any system of honorifics depends upon the respect it commands from the public. For data as to lay attitudes on honorary degrees, the views of four groups—business leaders, farm leaders, labor leaders, and newspapermen—were sought by the author. Letters were sent to 55 business leaders, 31 labor leaders, and 29 farm leaders. Usable replies were received from 18 of each of the first and second groups and from 14 of the third group. The views of newspapermen were obtained through an analysis of articles assembled by a clipping service.

The business leaders were selected chiefly (but not exclusively) from the officers of the following organizations: the National Association of Manufacturers, the Chamber of Commerce of the U. S., the American Bankers Association, and the Investment Bankers Association of America. The labor leaders were all officers of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The farm leaders were officials of three organizations: the American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Grange, and the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of America.

Only one of the labor leaders queried reported that he had been offered an honorary degree. President William Green of the American Federation

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of Labor stated that Oglethorpe University had conferred upon him the degree of "Doctor of Public Service." The writer found only one other labor leader (not among those who were asked to give their opinions, however) who had received an honorary degree. He was Agnes Nestor, vice-president of the International Glove Workers Union of America (LL.D. Loyola University, 1929).

One C. I. O. leader wrote: "It seems to be true . . . that representatives of organized labor don't seem to qualify for such awards, but we don't think this discrimination very harmful to our cause." An A. F. of L. leader made this strong statement:

I do not know of any Labor man of any kind who has ever received any recognition or degree from colleges, because most colleges—yes, even state universities—and institutions are controlled and influenced by Capital, by wealth . . . When it comes to outstanding human service, it is my opinion there have been certain men in the Labor Movement who have rendered more service to our present civilization . . . than any other class of individuals.

Another A. F. of L. leader echoed these sentiments when he observed: "Even those technicians in the labor movement having academic training, such as directors of research, have never been offered honorary degrees to my knowledge . . . In fact, distinguished work of any kind in the labor movement goes unnoticed by such agencies." A C. I. O. leader indicated that he thought labor leaders would willingly accept honorary degrees. Other observations by labor leaders follow:

I think if degrees are to be awarded for meritorious public service it is wholly appropriate that labor leaders should be included together with representatives of business and industry and the professions.

* * *

The basic principle on which honorary degrees should be awarded is that they should go to those who have performed the most service in the interests of the largest number of people. I do think, however, that some people I see receiving such honorary awards are a departure from the original or basic principles, in that it is now used to glorify people who should not aspire to a dog license, with apologies to the dog.

Only one of the farm leaders reported that he had received an honorary degree. He was Henry A. Wallace, a director of the American Farm Bureau Federation and now Vice-President of the United States. In 1920 he received an honorary M.S. in Agriculture from his Alma Mater, Iowa State College.

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An active Farm Bureau leader stated as follows: "We have on two or three different instances been approached by correspondence from two or three institutions, but felt, first that we were not entitled to such recognition, and further, that the type of recognition and purpose back of same was not what it should be and indicated clearly that we were not inclined to accept recognition." A Grange leader reported that the University of Wisconsin had awarded him "Honorable recognition for eminent services." This award, however, did not carry with it an honorary degree. Another Grange leader observed: "It is interesting to note that the Grange aided in establishing many of our Land Grant Colleges and that we have continually supported their appropriations for many years, yet I do not know of a Grange official ever receiving an honorary degree." The viewpoints of other farm leaders follow:

I am not greatly concerned about public distinction that really can't add much to the stature of a man who has not lived and performed to deserve it, nor can the failure to receive such recognition lessen the love of those served for their great benefactors.

* * *

If these degrees are granted as a recognition for outstanding public service, I have no objection and I think on that basis they tend toward encouraging public service.

* * *

I am one who believes that a policy of awarding degrees should be purely on a merit basis and not upon either wealth or political or social achievements alone.

* * *

I think honorary degrees, placed for outstanding service, are worth while. They bring to the minds of our people that service is the really important thing that is recognized.

Eleven honorary degrees, it was found, were concentrated on four of the 18 business leaders who responded to the author's inquiries.¹

Of these business leaders, 13 were favorable to the practice of conferring honorary degrees, two were unfavorable, and three neutral. (Of the 18 labor leaders, only three were favorable, six looked upon the practice unfavorably, and nine were neutral or expressed no opinion; seven

¹The business leaders were not asked whether or not they had received honorary degrees. This information was obtained from *Who's Who in America, 1940-41*. Since honorary degrees are sometimes omitted from this volume, the figures cited above may be lower than the actual number.

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of the 14 farm leaders expressed a definite opinion—five favorable, and two unfavorable).²

The business group was somewhat critical of the motives of colleges in granting honorary degrees, although not to the same extent as the farm and labor leaders. On the whole, businessmen were favorably disposed, as the following quotations indicate:

My impression is that honorary degrees awarded to men and women who have rendered conspicuous services to the nation are of value. We honor the heroes of war for gallant services beyond the routine of military duties; and it seems fitting that we should likewise recognize the unusual services of those in peace-time who war on poverty, injustice, unemployment, bigotry, any encroachment upon our liberties, and all forms of opposition to America's social and economic progress.

* * *

I think the awarding of honorary degrees, when done on a merit basis, is distinctly worthy . . . I have in mind particularly men of scientific attainment, or if one has been especially successful in developing some line of business or manufacturing which has made the world a better place to live in, it would seem that such recognition is well due them.

However, the business leaders mentioned the abuse of degrees for financial favors more frequently than did either the labor or farm groups. In response to the question "Why do colleges give honorary degrees?" one industrialist replied that it was best described "by the well-worn facetious expression, 'Most colleges get rich by degrees.'" A utility executive wrote: "Others award them in the hope that the individual so honored will remember the institution either in his will or by other valuable consideration during his lifetime." A banker who was a university trustee and the recipient of an honorary degree stated that one of the motives which prompts universities to confer honorary degrees is "to lay the foundation for a future 'touch' if the recipient be wealthy." An officer of the Chamber of Commerce of the U. S. gave this warning regarding financial abuses: "If educational institutions award such degrees for pecuniary favor, it is my opinion that an immense amount of harm in the long run will be inevitable." A similar comment was made by an official of the National Association of Manufacturers: "Where the award is made primarily for the purpose of interesting the individual in the institution

²The writer's inquiries were sent out as personal letters, not as questionnaires. This increased the range of comments but made classification more difficult. Three individuals classified each of the replies as favorable, unfavorable, or neutral, judgment being dependent upon the tone of the whole letter.

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making the award, either for financial reasons or otherwise, I believe the practice unwarranted. I regret to say that I fear many awards are made for this purpose."

Typical of the labor leaders' views in this connection were the following:

I would say in answer to your question as to why the degrees are awarded that it falls into two categories—to encourage endowments and secondly, to reward meritorious service. I believe the emphasis placed on the first reason tends to destroy the high purposes for which honorary degrees should be granted. I also believe that the awarding of honorary degrees properly carried out could render a real service in our society.

* * *

As I have observed it, it is chiefly a matter of payment for bequests, and I think it is pretty well recognized as that.

* * *

Honorary degrees are also awarded, of course, to politicians, particularly reactionary ones, such as Carter Glass.

* * *

It is my impression that honorary degrees are really a dignified means of advertising a college.

* * *

In reply to your inquiry as to why institutes of higher learning award these degrees, I would say that they do it for publicity and in the hope those who are given these honorary degrees will recommend the school to young people who are casting about for a college or university to attend.

An officer of the Farmers' Union thought the financial motive explained why farm leaders were rarely awarded degrees: "Since the work of most farm leaders is not of a spectacular kind, nor are they as a rule very rich . . . there is not much sense . . . to bother offering to confer honorary degrees upon agricultural leaders." A Grange leader stated: "Personally, I do not care for these honorary degrees and unfortunately many of them are awarded to wealthy people for favors which they hope to secure." Another farm leader wrote: "My impression is that institutions of learning award honorary degrees not on a basis of merit always, but for financial and political reasons."

Institutional publicity was the third most commonly mentioned motive for awarding degrees. In defending this motive, a leading industrialist

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asserted that it led to justifiable attention for an institution. But other businessmen expressed disapproval:

Degrees should not be used by way of bringing attention to the college or university that awards them.

* * *

Some institutions seek to be honored rather than to do honor.

A Farmers' Union officer concurred with the above view:

I am no authority on such matters, but so far as my observation has enabled me to make an opinion, I am convinced that most colleges give honorary degrees, not so much to honor the one to whom the degree is given, as to honor the college through the conferring of such an honorary degree upon some influential or prominent personage.

Five business men and one farm leader considered inspiration to others as a purpose of the awards. An industrialist put the matter in these words: "No doubt there is an inspiration to many younger people in actually seeing meritorious accomplishment recognized in the concrete form of the bestowal of such honors." A corporation executive felt the same way: "The practice stimulates beneficial endeavors." Two bankers observed as follows:

Recognition of good work is always a stimulus to the individual to do more to justify good opinion, as well as to stimulate others to put themselves in the class of those who are recognized contributors to the commonweal.

* * *

I think the reason institutions of higher learning award honorary degrees is principally to afford at graduation time an example to the graduating classes and other undergraduates of the appreciation the world shows of the accomplishments of scholars and men and women who make worth while contributions in various fields of human endeavor.

A farm leader expressed a similar attitude: "The recognition exerts a wholesome influence on the public and should tend to stimulate worthwhile efforts and sacrifices on behalf of public interest."

Three leaders in the business world expressed these divergent views:

This practice depends upon the intelligence with which it is carried out . . . If intelligently done, it is very helpful to the morale of the community.

* * *

The recipient of the honorary degree oftentimes feels greatly the honor accorded him. Sometimes this feeling finds its expression in willingness to make a speech, or

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in taking an interest in the activities of the institution. These things, to my mind, would appear on the credit side of the ledger.

* * *

[Honorary degrees are granted] to gratify the president or committee on honorary degrees with a brief sense of patronage and largesse.

This comment was made by a farm leader: "In some places, the degrees have become more or less of a joke because so many of them are given to elevate the social standards of the receivers."

Reasons mentioned only once or twice included: to "add lustre to the commencement pageantry," to "lift the morale of the community," to "secure a commencement speaker," to "gain students," and to give those who select the recipients a "feeling of importance," to add "an element of dignity and breadth to the conventional graduation exercises."

In general, then, it was felt that honorary degrees given for useful service are worthwhile, although there is considerable difference of opinion as to what constitutes such service. There was considerable agreement, however, that some awards are made for financial favors, political reasons, and publicity purposes.

In commenting on the question "Are such awards in keeping with the democratic tradition?" the majority felt that there was little ground for criticism on this score.

Observed the businessmen:

I see nothing in the practice that seems inconsistent with democratic traditions.

* * *

I should say it is not an undemocratic process but rather it is a method of recognizing credit that is due for good work accomplished which in itself is more than likely to be a product of the democratic process.

* * *

In a democratic form of government, there is no manner in which outstanding and unusual achievement may be recognized and one might consider that honorary degrees are a sort of a substitute for titles bestowed upon like individuals in monarchial forms of government.

Farm leaders held similar views:

If properly rendered, this recognition is in keeping with the democratic traditions of giving rewards for service.

* * *

I have never felt that the giving of degrees would hurt our democratic institutions, provided honorary degree were not given on the basis of contributions to the college or on purely monetary accomplishments.

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I am inclined to rank the Honorary Degree as an imitation of the European custom of Knighting those who have earned the favor of the monarch or whose influence or wealth might add splendor or strength to the court.

* * * *

Truly in America we do not want to foster an aristocracy in any angle or phase of our life . . . But, some kind of recognition should be given to outstanding, unselfish public service . . . It may be that the recognition and work of appreciation should come from some source closer to the greater mass of the people served, rather than from the colleges and universities.

As to the influence of honorary degree awards on American society, businessmen considered the practice beneficial, farm leaders were divided, and labor leaders thought it of little consequence:

On the whole, I should say the balance is in favor of the beneficial rather than the detrimental. (An industrialist.)

* * * *

If given for service, the influence on society will be distinctly helpful and unless high standards are maintained and established for such recognition the practice should be abolished. (A Farm Bureau official.)

* * * *

I think American society is influenced very little, if at all, by such degrees. (A financial leader.)

* * * *

I doubt if the result of such award on American society is very great. (A farm leader.)

* * * *

They are an honor which many people appreciate, although I do not see where they have had much influence. (A Farm Bureau official.)

Labor leaders were especially pronounced in their indifference:

I don't believe they mean much one way or the other, or that organized labor is very much concerned about the practice.

* * * *

I do not believe honorary degrees have any useful service or value.

* * * *

I suppose in some cases it influences public opinion, but in general I don't think it is of much importance.

* * * *

In so far as bringing any great benefit to Mankind or doing any great service for the world, such a degree in my opinion is worth nothing.

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Many of these politicians and financial figures have received degrees from a dozen or more universities, and what public benefit there is in this system is a little beyond my comprehension.

* * *

I think the influence of honorary degrees on American society is small, since I consider American society possibly in a different light than most people. American society to me is that 89% of the American people whose incomes are less than five thousand dollars a year. This part of society has such a struggle to live and eat that honorary degrees mean nothing to them.

Only one person in the three groups stated that he would like to see the practice of awarding honorary degrees extended. The greatest number of those who expressed an opinion on this point felt that the practice should be restricted in the interest of eliminating abuses. Several, however, very candidly urged that the awards be abolished.

I do not see any reason why the practice should be abolished or discouraged. Of course, if it were to be much further extended, such awards would come to be considered of little value. (A financial leader.)

* * *

I believe, by and large, that it is a custom which should be preserved under the practice of rewarding merit only, and not because of some idea of benefits received or hoped for. (A businessman.)

* * *

[Awards should be restricted] to individuals who have achieved outstanding success in business or accomplished unusual achievements in the world of science. (An officer of the American Bankers Association.)

* * *

I personally should not favor abolishing the practice. On the other hand, I hope the time will come when the awards are restricted to those individuals who have made some outstanding contribution. (An industrialist.)

* * *

I would not be in favor of extending the practice of awarding honorary degrees, but how it could be effectually restricted or whether it should be abolished entirely, I do not know. (A businessman.)

The following statements reflect the sentiment of several businessmen:

In answer to your question of 'extending, restricting, or abolishing the practice'—I should say, Leave it alone. On the whole, as far as I know, it is being well done by the universities and colleges now. To extend it might be to cheapen the practice; nothing would be gained by abolishing the practice—something would be lost.

* * *

As to whether the practice of granting honorary degrees should be restricted or extended, my opinion is not based on information or study, but I have a feeling that

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it is already being overdone. Honorary degrees do not appeal to me personally. My own interest in education and science would not be quickened or enhanced by an honorary degree.

* * *

It is my conviction that nearly all men possessed of the attainments which prompt colleges to confer such degrees upon them would prefer not to receive them. If tendered to them, they cannot decline them without seeming ungracious. A few vain celebrities may covet them; the vast majority of really distinguished men are genuinely modest and would prefer to be inconspicuous and to escape these equivocal medals . . . I would favor abolishing the practice of conferring honorary degrees.

Somewhat different were the views of agricultural leaders.

Perhaps the better plan would be, rather than to abolish the recognition, to clean up those institutions that are not maintaining high ethical standards of requirements for issuance of same.

* * *

I doubt if the practice should be abolished, but think the degrees should be honestly conferred.

* * *

Taking it as a whole, I think it is a bad practice. It is something that is started as a rule with a laudable purpose, but the donors find out sooner or later that they have to open the door to people of influence who hardly deserve the honor. I doubt whether we can abolish the practice but it should be limited to a great degree.

PRESS OPINIONS

To secure a fair sampling of the opinions of the press, the service of a press clipping bureau was employed. The bureau was asked to find articles in newspapers and periodicals during the months of June, July, and August, 1938, which expressed some opinion on the practice of awarding honorary degrees. Over one hundred clippings from newspapers from all parts of the United States were assembled. The occasion for most of these articles was the conferring of honorary degrees on certain individuals. Walt Disney, Hollywood's celebrated cartoonist, and Harry Moore, Governor of New Jersey, were mentioned in nearly three-fourths of the articles. Specifically, more than half of the 127 articles found commented on the honorary degrees given by Harvard, Yale, and the University of Southern California to Walter Disney, then (1938) at a peak of his popularity as the creator of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The articles prompted by the Disney awards made up more than two-thirds of those which lauded the various recipients. None questioned the merit of the cartoonist. The following article appeared in six different newspapers scattered from New York to New Mexico:

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Walt Disney, whose formal education ended in 1918 when he went to France as a Red Cross ambulance driver after one year in a Chicago high school, has been awarded an honorary degree of Master of Science by the University of Southern California.

None will quarrel with this award, which recognized Mr. Disney's "distinguished achievements in cinematography." Indeed, it seems to us, the new Master of Science deserves a higher degree. Walt Disney should have a Ph.D. at least.

The artist who created Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Pluto the Pup, the genius who brought Snow White and her small friends to life, should be entitled to call himself Doctor of Philosophy—about the merriest, kindest, most encouraging philosophy now being spread over a troubled world.³

In suggesting that the honorary degree for Disney should have been a Ph.D., the journalist made the common error of failing to distinguish between an earned and honorary degree and illustrates the popular confusion in this regard.

In a lighter vein, columnist H. I. Phillips gave his version of the event:

President—Disney, Walt: artist, friend of mice, glorifier of ducks and the man from whom millions first learned that a symphony is not a bend in a pipe; Mr. Disney, we are happy here at Harvard to confer upon you one of our 1938 degrees, trusting that you will not immediately try to animate it.

Dopey—Attaboy!

Mickey Mouse—Don't be crude. Remember, Dopey, you're a Harvard man now . . .

President—Nevertheless, Mr. Disney, it was our verdict here on the banks of the Charles, that anybody who can make the world laugh under present conditions is indeed an outstanding contributor to the welfare of man.

Grumpy—I still think if we had waited we could have been tapped for Yale.

President—In an era of pompous struttings you gave us the three little pigs, in an age of mad bellowings into loudspeakers you gave us the silly symphonies, in a time of exaggerated egos you gave us Mickey and Minnie Mouse.

Mickey Mouse—I hope Princeton is listening in on this.

President—In a day when the world was sickened by the goose-steppings, chest-thumpings and bully-like gestures of its notable figures, you gave us Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs . . .

Dopey—One more dwarf and we could make the Harvard crew.

President—And so, Mr. Disney, Harvard is happy to make you a Master of Arts, in any flavor you desire.⁴

³*Columbus (Ohio) Citizen*, June 9, 1938; *Cincinnati (Ohio) Post*, June 10, 1938; *Pittsburgh (Pa.) Press*, June 11, 1938; *El Paso (Tex.) Herald Post*, June 11, 1938; *New York World Telegram*, June 15, 1938; *Albuquerque (N. M.) Tribune*, June 25, 1938.

⁴*Boston Globe*, June 22, 1938.

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One editorial on Disney's degree praised the cartoonist, but criticized colleges for their unnecessary ritual and their practice of making the simple seem complex. In all of the articles the praise was for Disney rather than for the honorary degree system.

Yale University has bestowed an honorary Master of Arts degree upon Walt Disney, thereby officially recognizing the fact that a man may be a genius even though he does work in Hollywood.

The creator of Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Horace Horsecollar and Pluto the Pup has been brightening the lives of movie goers for several years now, but it is not surprising that university honors for him were delayed a bit . . .

But you must realize that a college can't award an honorary degree to a man unless a high-sounding reason for it can be advanced and our theory is that the professors have been busy for some time finding good aesthetic and philosophical reasons for liking Disney's cartoons in order that he might be so honored. It would obviously be impossible for Yale to admit Disney to "all rights and privileges" of that venerable university through some such simple and straightforward statement as: "We take this method of showing our appreciation to Mr. Disney for many happy hours at the movies."

Instead, Prof. William Lyon Phelps is constrained to say: "His work has the elements of a great romantic art; the beautiful, the fantastic, the grotesque, all combining in irresistible charm . . . He has the originality and characteristic of a genius, creating the demand as well as the supply. He has achieved the impossible." To which a Man in the Balcony might reply: "We still like his cartoons."⁵

The idea that honorary degrees are a substitute for royal titles was expressed by a number of papers. The following item is typical:

It's nice to know that Harvard is about to recognize Mickey Mouse. The King of England included a Hollywood movie actor who is a British subject in the birthday honors, and since Walt Disney can't become Sir Walt, we like to know that he gets a cap and gown and the degree of Master of Arts anyway. On June 4 the University of Southern California gave Disney the degree of Master of Science. Boston University wanted to honor him, but Harvard had already spoken for that date.⁶

By calling public attention to the few who rise from the bottom of the ladder to the top, honorary degrees tend to make the exception seem the rule. The effect is to create the illusion that equality of opportunity is much more prevalent than it actually is. The following editorials use the Disney award as an object lesson for their readers:

The famous adage: "Build a better mouse trap and the world will beat a path to your door," came through for Walt Disney, who went the adage one better and made a better mouse.

⁵*Greenwich (Conn.) Time*, June 23, 1938.

⁶*Katherine Darst, St. Louis (Mo.) Globe Democrat*. June 11, 1938.

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And this week Harvard paid Disney its greatest tribute in an honorary degree, which is to say that the creator of Mickey Mouse is now recognized as a definite contributor to the culture and life of our world.

Incidentally, Mr. Disney has made himself a couple of million dollars so that he can now devote all his time to creating new and funnier little people for the screen and comic page, while unknown understudies grind out the characters which we have grown so to love.

If there is an object lesson to be learned from the example of Disney, who was an obscure cartoonist, grinding away at a drawing board but ten years ago, it probably lies in the fact that he lives in a land where creative ability and its capitalization are pre-eminent.⁷

* * *

Here in academic robes is Walt Disney, graduate of no college or university, but upon whom both Yale and Harvard this commencement season were proud to bestow honorary Master of Art degrees. Because his genius gave a new type of screen entertainment to the world and because his success was achieved by the traditional American formula of hard work, patient self-improvement, initiative and development of individual resource, his honors are as richly deserved as any given to men and women with many times his formal educational equipment.⁸

In contrast with the newspaper articles which saw in the Disney degree a worthy title for a "poor boy who made good," the award given to Governor Moore of New Jersey evoked a vigorous storm of protest. A prominent educator said:

When Harvard and Yale granted academic honors to Walter Disney, they made manifest their recognition of a service to the people of America. When Princeton conferred the doctorate upon Governor Moore, it applauded and placed its prestige and approval on disservice to the American people.⁹

Much of the protest was occasioned by the nation-wide interest in the trial (then in progress) of Moore's close political ally, Mayor Frank Hague of Jersey City, for violation of civil liberties. Twenty-five news stories, one-fifth of all the stories received from the clipping bureau, were about Governor Moore's degree. Nine defended the Governor, 12 were highly critical, and four were neutral. Eight of the nine stories defending the award were from local New Jersey newspapers, most of them located where Mayor Hague had his strongest political support. In contrast, the opposition came from papers as far away as Boston and New Orleans. Even William Allen White entered the fray:

⁷*Medford (Mass.) Mercury*, June 25, 1938.

⁸*Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch*, June 29, 1938.

⁹From a speech by Professor Alonzo Myers of New York University under the auspices of the National Education Association, as reported by the *New York Times*, June 27, 1938.

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Princeton University is in the midst of one sad mess. For some reason or other, the powers that be in Princeton have decided to give an honorary degree to Governor Moore of New Jersey, a cheap skate. It is no unusual thing for universities to pour doctorates onto cheap skates. (The editor of *The Gazette* has a lot of 'em himself if it comes down to that.) But this particular cheap skate, Governor Moore of New Jersey, sits by and sees Hague, mayor of Jersey City, suspend the Constitutional Bill of Rights in the mayor's town. Governor Moore should and could restore liberty in Jersey City over night. He did nothing, being Hague's man Friday. More than that, he joined Hague reviewing a big parade, endorsing Hague's tyrannical suspension of the right of free speech and assemblage.

So when it is known on the Princeton campus that Governor Moore is to have a Princeton doctorate, the senior class meets and passes denouncing resolutions. The faculty passes protesting petitions. The student body gets rebellious and the devil is to pay.

All good citizens will rejoice in the quick response of Princeton to the disgraceful attitude of its governing body. So long as seniors meet and denounce and when faculties pass petitions and students threaten to get out of hand, when Freedom shrieks, liberty is reasonably safe in the United States. It is when we take it lying down that we are in danger.¹⁰

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* encouraged the protests with this comment:

Petitions are being circulated at Princeton University among students and faculty members in opposition to the award of an honorary degree to Gov. A. Harry Moore of New Jersey, reported to be a part of the Princeton Commencement plans next week. The protest reads in part:

"We object to our university's putting its stamp of approval on Mayor Frank Hague by offering his puppet, Gov. Moore, an honorary degree. We do not believe that the tyranny and intolerance for which Moore and Hague stand have anything in common with the tolerance and freedom for which Princeton stands."

How closely Gov. Moore is related to Mayor Hague and the flouting of civil liberties in Jersey City we do not presume to say . . . But it is significant that the mere report should produce a reaction so prompt and so forthright at Princeton. It augurs well for New Jersey that at its leading educational institution, which is, of course, one of the great universities of the world, there are those who will condemn openly Boss Hague and all his works, not excepting the persons who owe office to him.¹¹

A Massachusetts editor pointed out the dangers of awarding honorary degrees for other than scholarly achievements:

It is easy to sympathize with the Princeton graduates and under-graduates who protest against the granting of an honorary degree at the coming commencement

¹⁰*Emporia (Kansas) Gazette*, June 21, 1938.

¹¹*St. Louis (Mo.) Post-Dispatch*, June 17, 1938.

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exercises to Gov. Moore of New Jersey. In spite of what is said to have been unusually frequent attendance at the meetings of the Princeton board of trustees, of which he is an ex-officio member, Gov. Moore is hardly to be classed among those governors who have lent the distinction of a ripe culture or of a notably broad conception of public service to the administration of state affairs. It is not unjust to say that he has been identified, both in the Senate and in his present office, as a machine politician, and the machine is one to which Mayor Hague has lately been giving anything but good advertising.

But it is also easy to understand, the honorary degree system being what it is and having its established precedents of recognition, that the Princeton authorities were in something of a dilemma. There probably are few colleges or universities which venture to give honorary degrees outside the realm of strict scholarship which have not given degrees that afterward looked to most people as unwise as they looked to some people at the time they were made. For example, the honorary degree which Yale gave to the late Charles S. Mellen of the New Haven road was never cited, in the days when his management of that corporation was a subject of investigation, as an evidence of collegiate wisdom that was altogether unerring.¹²

In Jersey City a writer defended Governor Moore by labelling the protesting students as un-American supporters of Soviet Russia.

The older folks are much concerned, and rightly so, as we hear our boys and girls shouting and babbling that every other country in the world is better than their own. We shudder as we hear them attack the Constitution, and feel apologetic for their bad manners as they make diabolical attacks on men who have given years of service to their community, state and nation. . . .

Where do these boys and girls get these half-baked ideas? Upon what do they base their conclusions that the Soviet Union has a better theory of social and political action than we have? In what other country do boys and girls have more privileges than in our own land of the free?

Does not that magnificent document, the Declaration of Independence, that guarantees social, religious and political freedom, mean anything to them?

We had a shocking example recently when young men students at one of America's great universities protested against the conferring of an honorary degree on New Jersey's only third-term governor.

Do these boys know that the gentleman has asked in his second term as governor to have a survey of state government made by the university? Do they know that he has consistently, ever since, recommended that many of the reforms suggested in the survey be adopted and that he has been partially successful?

If our boys and girls would study and consider the Constitution of the United States as part of their summer reading; if they would endeavor to be of service in their communities and state; if they would fit themselves to help solve many of our social ills, they would be helping to build rather than destroy their own country.¹³

¹²*Springfield (Mass.) Republican*, June 18, 1938.

¹³*Jersey City (N. J.) Journal*, June 13, 1938.

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A few days later, the same paper dismissed the student protest as mere pre-vacation nonsense:

The stunt of a handful of Princeton students getting up that petition protesting against the award by Princeton University next Tuesday of an LL.D. degree to Gov. Moore may be classed as one of those silly June pranks in which rollicking students on the eve of their summer vacation are apt to find diversion.¹⁴

According to the following editorial, Governor Moore's citation indicated that Princeton felt a mistake has been made:

The charge has been made that Governor Moore is merely a puppet for Mayor Frank Hague of New Jersey and that he is simply a machine politician.

The public awaited the citation in connection with the conferring of the degree thinking that possibly it might reveal how seriously the university felt about conferring the degree. The citation writers must have struggled when they composed the piece that was read as Dr. Moore took the hood. Here's what the citation says:

"Arthur Harry Moore, Governor of New Jersey; Princeton University, mindful of the part which it has been her privilege to play in the life of the state for nearly two centuries, today affirms her allegiance to the State of New Jersey in conferring this degree upon a son of New Jersey three times chosen governor of the state, a trust and honor never before conferred by the electorate on any citizen."

That does not commit the University to any serious endorsement.

Contrast it with the citation in connection with the same honorary degree upon Cordell Hull:

"Cordell Hull, Secretary of State of the United States; after serving his own state of Tennessee as a member of her legislature and of her judiciary, he was for nearly 25 years her representative in the Congress of the United States, first in the House and later in the Senate; a profound student of the principles of taxation and of tariffs, he was, during the administration of President Wilson, author of the federal income and inheritance tax laws; as secretary of state he has formulated, and with singular skill and success has made effective, a policy of reciprocal trade between our nation and others, basing his action upon the belief that the economic welfare of all nations is the only sure foundation for the lasting welfare of our own."

"Quiet, unselfish, and determined, he is breaking down the economic barriers between nations, and by thus lessening international rivalry and suspicion he is establishing a powerful safe-guard of peace."

Even a great university can make mistakes but when the whirlwind of disapproval of an act comes Princeton can stay the blow in a measure at least by adroit language. The university is to be congratulated on the way it handled the situation after public opinion had spoken.¹⁵

¹⁴*Jersey City (N. J.) Journal*, June 18, 1938.

¹⁵*Watertown (N. J.) Times*, June 22, 1938. See *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, Vol. 38, p. 385, July 1, 1938.

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The militant *New York Post* expressed the opinion that the Governor had been honored to insure state appropriations for the University.¹⁶

Several of the items collected by the clipping bureau raised the question as to why colleges confer honorary degrees. Of the 23 news stories which attempted to answer this question, four defended and 19 criticized the honorary degree system. One of the former articles contained the following statement:

The conferring of honorary degrees provides one of the few means we have in this country of expressing appreciation of public service and international good will. From both points of view, the selection of Lord Tweedsmuir was an admirable one. Harvard and Yale are to be congratulated on their happy choice.¹⁷

Another newspaper stated that the outstanding degree awards for the year were those given to Richard Barthelmess, the movie actor, and Walt Disney. It observed that "the bestowing of the degrees mentioned will inspire others to attain successful heights in their fields of endeavor, even though they do not have a college education."¹⁸

"Praising prudent men"¹⁹ is another worthy reason for conferring degrees, according to a journalist who approved heartily of honoring the chairman of a state highway board who had built the state's roads on a pay-as-you-go plan. The writer explained that the granting of honorary degrees to worthy officials creates a demand for the continuation and extension of their work. A columnist, whose story was occasioned by the award to the highway chief, stated that he favored the "sparing use of honorary degrees" because they recognize "service which, while not strictly academic, in frequent instances are now more valuable than the work accomplished by those who earn conventional degrees."²⁰

Criticisms of honorary degrees which appeared most frequently dealt with the motives of institutions which allegedly confer honorary degrees for financial reasons and publicity purposes. One reporter noted that the universities "quite frequently award the honorary degree to some individual, the use of whose name with the awarding institution gives it more advertising than the degree gives the recipient."²¹ Another writer said: "To us the awarding of honorary degrees has become more or less of an effort

¹⁶*New York Post*, June 20, 1938.

¹⁷*Chicago Tribune*, June 28, 1938.

¹⁸*Hoosick Falls (N. Y.) Standard Press*, June 30, 1938.

¹⁹*Boston Herald*, June 17, 1938.

²⁰*Brattleboro (Vt.) Reformer*, June 14, 1938.

²¹*Douglas (Ariz.) Dispatch*, June 23, 1938.

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on the part of the university directors to share the limelight with persons, who in past years, have attained some sort of nationally acclaimed prominence.”²² The following blunt editorial criticizing the ulterior motives of degree-granting institutions was published in a Kansas newspaper and reprinted in at least one other paper:

For the past week the graduation season has been in full tide. Degrees have been given thousands of young people in recognition of their four years of hard work in classroom, laboratory, or gridiron. As usual, though, they have been cheapened by the flood of honorary degrees that have been passed out at the same time.

A case might be made for the award of a single honorary degree to an Einstein, a Ford or a Hughes. When jack-leg politicians and nonentities who are liberal givers to educational projects show up, however, with enough letters after their names to represent two lifetimes of academic work, the whole honorary degree system is thrown into serious question.

Under investigation it usually proves that an honorary degree represents only the effort of some college to shine a little in the reflected glory of some conspicuous citizen. The motive may not be ulterior, but the appearances certainly indicate it. The fair presumption ordinarily is that the awarding institution is less interested in paying a deserved honor than in winning some advertising, cash, or political advantage for itself.

A citizen who has distinguished himself in the town is no more entitled to the honors of the gown than the wife of a public official is to succeed her deceased husband in office. The intentions back of the honorary degrees may be good but in the average instance the awards are degrading alike to those who give and those who receive.²³

Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes, a columnist and former university professor, devoted an entire column to a severe criticism of honorary degrees:

June is the great month for weddings, bass fishing, and the honorary degree racket.

It is easy to put the essence of the honorary degree racket in a nutshell. Academic honors are traded against hoped-for political and financial favors. Honorary degrees constitute a bargain counter opportunity for universities. They cost nothing, so the institution is not out anything in case an expected vendor of favors fails to come across after he has been awarded a glamorous degree.

Frequently the universities hold out on the big boys until after they have made good. In any event, the moguls of finance, business and politics usually crash through, for as Carlyle once observed, “Americans like to hobble down to prosperity on the crutches of capital letters.”

Once upon a time a man who had an LL.D. strung along after his name was a learned specialist. His degree of “legum doctor” meant that he had mastered both

²²*Bridgeport (Conn.) Herald*, June 26, 1938.

²³*Hutchinson (Kans.) News*, June 11, 1938.

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the civil and the canon law. Such a medieval scholar was equally at home in Justinian's *Institutes* and Gratian's *Decretum*.

Today, it would almost seem that the chief prerequisite for embellishment with an LL.D. is complete ignorance of all law. One of our leading weeklies compiled the batch of honorary degrees awarded during a single week of the honorific orgy at commencement time. In the list we find the names of leading utility presidents, bank presidents, railroad presidents, mercantile marine executives and the like.

That such men are estimable persons nobody need deny. On the other hand, not even the most servile flatterer could hardly allege that they are an ornament to scholarship, least of all legal scholarship. Even when they want to break the law they have to hire an expensive and adroit attorney to give them advice and counsel.

Obviously the degrees were granted as evidence of gratitude for past financial favors or of expectancy of future gifts. The LL.D. has so far lost repute that the law schools have had to find another degree, J.U.D., to bestow upon those who have actually carried on advanced studies in jurisprudence.

Few of the great in finance and business have been overlooked by college presidents and trustees in working the honorary degree racket.

As John R. Tunis once pointed out, the honorary degree racket has other uses besides angling for favors from the rich. It is used for log-rolling and backslapping among university presidents, obtaining free speakers for commencement day and gaining newspaper publicity for the institution.

One candid university president with an oratorical gift admitted that four out of five of his honorary degrees were awarded to him for making free commencement addresses.

If we are to honor those who have given of their physical riches to build greater dormitories and laboratories, why not honor those who have given their spirit to make America a more tolerable place to inhabit? Why not honor the humanitarians as well as the donors of gymnasiums and stadiums?

In our present system of dependence upon voluntary gifts, our universities are undoubtedly justified in bartering their honors for value received or expected. But they could do much more to restore their reputation as halls of free learning and humanitarian impulse by recognizing the existence and services of those who sense social injustices and dare to work for a better era of human civilization.²⁴

In reprinting a *New Yorker* cartoon showing a college president granting an honorary degree to an obviously rich but unintellectual individual, a New York tabloid commented:

The Honorary Degree racket of dishing out LL.D.'s, Ph.D.'s, XYZ's to rich men and politicians in the fervent hope of getting new gymnasiums, libraries, athletic fields, good will or plain publicity is a phase of American education that has been exploited by a few colleges. It has long needed puncturing as badly as that other college racket—football . . .²⁵

²⁴Barnes, Harry Elmer, "Honorary Degree Racket." *New York World-Telegram*, June 9, 1938.

²⁵*New York Mirror*, June 10, 1938.

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An editorial in a Maine newspaper stressed the monetary motive:

Some of these degrees are really honorary and confer a real distinction because of their recognition of some outstanding accomplishment. Because of this, however, they have become a valuable reward for just the friends of the colleges whose meriting achievement is a fat check to some college causes. These special friendships of the colleges rather lower the standards of the degrees generally, opening them to the criticisms of the disgruntled.

Any ordinarily good citizen of fair standing in his community can get an honorary college degree if he sets about it right. College authorities are mostly complacent as the degrees cost them nothing and they do help now and then. A little log-rolling and leg-pulling with a bit of cash perhaps now and then will bring one in for almost anyone. The really valuable ones are never solicited, of course, but this makes solicitation more attractive to some people.

So the honorary college degrees do go very largely like royal honors, some for real merit and some for personal considerations alone. Every college turns out a batch of them every commencement, making them almost as common as Kentucky colonels.²⁶

A New York editor bemoaned the conferring of degrees on rich men and politicians:

With each succeeding "commencement" season, we become a bit more weary of reading about the gents who are awarded flossier letters than the regular, full-term graduates get after working their way or their fathers through college. And we become a trifle nauseated by the endless procession of pictures of muttonheads in mortarboards. . . .

But we think that for every recipient who has made his mark, there is at least one other who gets the laurels because the awarding institution hoped to make a mark of him, via his bank account.

Bestowing the honors upon politicians leaves us almost speechless—although there is something of the appropriate about giving the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws to some sleight-of-hand statesman who has been doctoring laws all of his adult life. . . .

Not every beneficiary of these right-in-the-lap degrees is likely to kick in with a gymnasium or library or athletic field, but if an occasional one does something like that, it averages up nicely. . . .²⁷

The liberal editors of *The Nation* observed:

Throughout the years the fate of university graduates, the paths followed, have been necessarily varied. But the standard of achievement has remained fixed and its pattern has been accepted by the majority. Our colleges have turned out industrial chieftans, talented union-busters, tired business men, literary vassals, and the hosts of little, ambitious men who have sought so earnestly to mimic the big shots.

²⁶*Augusta (Me.) Journal*, June 15, 1938.

²⁷*New York Home News*, June 16, 1938. (Formerly *Bronx Home News*.)

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All of them were caught in the competitive merry-go-round; wealth was the inevitable barometer of attainment; Money Bags was a nice fellow personally, and the country club epitomized success in life. These strivings were officially sanctified with honorary degrees for the chief victors . . .²⁸

An article in the *New Republic* was especially caustic about the honorary degrees given to business men in the prosperous twenties:

This is the season in which our institutions of hired [sic.] learning go in for making honorary doctors. . . . In those days (before 1929) when the prefixes sat down to pick a batch of candidates for honorary degrees they looked them up in Dunn and Bradstreet. . . . If you had ten million you might be made a Doctor of Commerce. . . . If you had fifty million or had access to that much, you might even be made a Doctor of Laws. . . . But this year it has been a little different [1933]. . . . After all it is a little dangerous to pick a big business man for an honorary degree these uncertain days. You might select him and get him fitted for a cap and gown and then have him go bankrupt or even get indicted on you. . . . This year the Honorary Degree Department has had to pass its dividend.²⁹

In addition to the frequent criticism that honorary degrees are given for financial reasons and publicity purposes, there were comments that too many honors are heaped upon the same individuals, that many recipients are mediocre, that state-controlled universities should not honor their own state officials, that titles for honorary degrees are often misleading, and that degrees should be limited to former students. Several of the more severe criticisms are cited below:

Sometimes a man has received so many honorary degrees that additional sheepskins mean less than additional stock certificates.³⁰

* * *

The honorary degree racket cheapens and weakens the whole educational structure. It should be no part of a university's business to turn out Kentucky colonels and Visiting Firemen.³¹

* * *

Certainly, most of the bestowing of honorary degrees is the bunk. So why don't the bestowing institutions get candid about the whole business? Instead of just selecting this person or that for the honor, in hopes that he may kick in with a donation, why don't they merely publish a list of charges for each honorary degree, and then sell the title to anybody who comes across with the price? I know the college administrators will go aghast on us at this suggestion, but they won't be fooling

²⁸*The Nation*, "What Every Young Man Should Know," June 18, 1938, p. 687.

²⁹Flynn, John T., *New Republic*, Vol. 75, p. 208. July 5, 1933.

³⁰*Athol (Mass.) News*, June 24, 1938.

³¹*New Orleans Item*, June 25, 1938.

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anybody; most colleges are plain business organizations, always ready to turn a reasonably honest dollar.³²

The four articles defending the honorary degree system were primarily concerned with praising a certain recipient and the comments on the system were used as a means of heaping more honor on this individual. In contrast, the critical articles were in most cases devoted entirely to criticism and usually did not mention names. That several times as many journalists were willing to present the case against degrees as were willing to defend the system undoubtedly reflected public reaction.

Edgar Bergen's dummy, known to millions as Charlie McCarthy, was the subject of several humorous articles announcing that Charlie was soon to receive an honorary degree from one of our foremost universities.³³ That the gentlemen of the press should seize upon such an unusual award to philosophize on the whole question and exploit it for the amusement of their readers is perhaps to be expected. It evoked the following comments from a Chicago journalist:

Charlie McCarthy, it seems, is to receive an honorary master's degree from Northwestern University's school of speech, in recognition of his mastery of the art of innuendo and snappy comeback. There may be academic reactionaries who will protest that the university, in bestowing cap and gown upon a piece of fence post, is donning the cap and bells of the jester it honors. But we see nothing incongruous in the ceremony. Certainly it will not be the first time that a blockhead has received a university degree.

One Eastern citadel of culture, for instance, received widespread publicity because of its "eleven iron men" who played through the entire football season virtually without substitutions. Another boasted of its "eleven blocks of granite." Almost any progressive university could use a few sturdy chunks of solid oak on its football squad; but, since Charlie's movie and radio contracts preclude the possibility of his starring as a blocking halfback for the Wildcats, it must be obvious that Northwestern is not engaged in proselytizing, but honors Charlie solely for his intellectual achievements in the field of speech.

And who has better claim to such honors? Conferring of honorary degrees upon stuffed shirts with the gift of gab has become a college tradition. If pressed, one could probably list a dozen of last June's honorary Ph.D.'s whose contributions to American culture have been less substantial than Charlie's—and let the chips fall where they may. At least Charlie's shirt is stuffed with something less ephemeral than wind. Furthermore, we know of few exponents of public speaking whose remarks can more fittingly be classified as "pithy."³⁴

³²*New York Home News*, June 19, 1938.

³³More clippings might have been received had not the clipping service been discontinued.

³⁴*Chicago News*, August 23, 1938.

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The low intellectual status of some recipients and the abundant bestowals of awards was the theme of a humorous column by trenchant Ernest L. Meyer:

How Ambrose Arose From Humble Janitor to the Recipient of an Honorary Degree

Ambrose, the handyman, came in this morning to wash the windows. It was a chilly, windy morning, just the kind he always picks to wash windows. . . .

"Well, sir, I am a bit tired this morning," admitted Ambrose, bringing in his pail, brush, rubber squeegee and rags. "I was out rather late last night at the college commencement exercises and I didn't get much sleep." . . . "I am happy to inform you, sir, that last night the college gave me my B.S. and D.W.W."

"What in the world is that?"

"Honorary degrees," said Ambrose patiently. "B.S. is Bachelor of Squeegee and D.W.W. means Doctor of Window Washing."

"Ambrose," I cried, "you are not yourself. I'm afraid you are in a dreadful state of sobriety."

"Indeed I am not," said Ambrose, highly offended. "Though I forgive you, sir, because perhaps you haven't heard about the college's policy of giving honorary degrees to business and professional leaders in all walks of life. The president of the college himself made a nice talk about me. 'How could we hope for clear vision if it were not for window washers?' he said. And at that you should have heard the 6,000 people in the audience cheer."

"Goodness, what a mob. What were they all doing there?"

"Getting honorary degrees," said Ambrose. "Yes, sir, we are making strides in education. Everybody can get a higher education these days by standing on a platform five minutes instead of going to college four years. If that ain't time-saving and efficiency I'll eat my diploma."³⁵

The citation read at the conferring of the degree is that part of the ritual most directly designed for public consumption. When a sober and serious ceremony is made to appear ridiculous in the eyes of the public, its effectiveness is lowered. Columnist H. I. Phillips, composed several comic citations for the amusement of his readers:

Croopsey, Framingham K., engineer, stamp collector and reformed golf addict—Accept the degree of Doctor of Well-earned Plaudits for one of the sagest observations of the decade. Told about the rule limiting golfers to 14 clubs, you remarked: "Could the scores be any worse if we limited 14 golfers to one club?" Do you wish your degree with or without lettuce? . . .

Giffie, Wilbur T., business man, community leader and trick bicycle rider—We know of no American who has made himself more distinguished by less effort.

³⁵Meyer, Ernest L., "As the Crow Flies," *New York Post*, April 17, 1939.

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Offered a low number on your auto license plate, you showed complete lack of enthusiasm, refused to consider it and said simply: "I regard it as a form of extreme conceit." After picking up your degree, Wilbur, stop in the dean's office and have a piece of pie....

Stubbleby, Otis K., Bus driver and gentleman: It all may have been a mistake, Otis, but nevertheless, we have witnesses that as a driver of a passenger bus through a congested area you obeyed the right lights on one occasion the same as anybody else. Doing it even once makes you the busman of the year. How're all the folks?

Dintsmore, Arthur H., Commuter, office worker and homebody: Of course it is a little early to commit ourselves, but, although the proud owner of a little suburban home, you haven't yet mowed the lawn between 6 and 8 a.m. The neighbors are behind us to a man in awarding you a degree today and suggesting that perhaps you would like it with mayonnaise.³⁶

³⁶Phillips, H. I., *Boston Globe*, June 16 and June 20, 1938.

CHAPTER VII

Summary and Recommendations

In investigating the awarding of honorary degrees by colleges and universities in the United States, the present study has used three approaches: (1) by making a detailed historical study of the custom in seven institutions—Harvard, Columbia, Smith College, and the Universities of North Carolina, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and California—in five periods (before 1787, 1830-39, 1870-79, 1907-16, 1919-28); (2) by studying the contemporary practices of over 200 institutions; and (3) by analyzing the opinions of college presidents, business men, farm and labor leaders, and journalists.

Few honorary degrees were given in America before the Revolution, but there was a rapid growth in the number awarded after 1776. By 1800, most of the older, established colleges were awarding such honors. In 1692, which marked the beginning of the practice in America, three honorary degrees were conferred; in 1930, 1,347 were extended.

The LL.D. and D.D. have been the most numerous of all honorary doctorates. The latter maintained first place until the 1920's, when it was surpassed by the LL.D. The decline of the D.D., reflecting a lessening influence of the clergy, had been going on among the older and larger institutions for more than 50 years, but an increasing number of D.D.'s given by small denominational colleges kept the total number high. A trend

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since 1900 has been to confer more honorary doctorates and fewer master's and bachelor's *honoris causa*, and to distinguish somewhat more definitely between the academically earned and the honorary degrees.

Before the Civil War many honorary M.D. degrees were granted practicing physicians who lacked the title received by their younger competitors on graduation from the new medical schools. However, this practice was discontinued as a result of the efforts of the American Medical Association and the protests of physicians with earned M.D. degrees.

In the last half of the nineteenth century higher education was characterized by the beginning of the modern graduate schools offering Doctor of Philosophy degrees. Almost simultaneously, the desires of older colleagues for the Ph.D. resulted in numerous bestowals of this degree *honoris causa*. However, by 1910, the combined efforts of those with earned Ph.D.'s, leading educational journals, professional organizations, and the U. S. Bureau of Education successfully curbed this practice.

In the seven institutions studied in detail, certain important changes and trends were evident during the five periods reviewed.¹

First, the median age of the recipients was considerably lower in the earlier periods, 45 in the 1830's and 60 in the 1920's.

Second, the ratio of D.D.'s declined after 1900; LL.D.'s remained popular; and the new Litt. D.'s and Sc.D.'s became more numerous. Although no awards were extended to women in the periods before 1900 (Smith College excepted) such bestowals amounted to four per cent in the 1919-28 decade.

Third, the condition of one individual's receiving honorary degrees from several institutions was much more pronounced after 1900. Closely related to this was the concentration of degrees on holders of certain positions—college presidents, bishops, governors, etc. Since many of these recipients received no honorary degree before attaining their position, the award might appear to be a recognition of the office.

Fourth, committee members, in choosing recipients of honorary degrees, showed a tendency to favor their own class. For example, committees made up of faculty members included more professors in their selections of recipients. Trustees drew more recipients from the professions which they themselves represented. Persons with "inside lines"—alumni, local residents, friends of the selecting committee, members of the "right"

¹See end of chapter four for a more complete summary of this phase of the study.

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denomination or political party received doctorates out of proportion to their merits. Not until 1900 did favoritism become less evident.

Those in academic work (college presidents and professors) received a generous share of honors in all periods studied. Although their share increased up to the first World War, it declined somewhat in the post-war decade. Changes in the popularity of certain academic fields are apparent from the type of professor honored. In general, after 1900 more awards went to those in scientific and practical fields and fewer to teachers of theology and classics. The continued prestige of those holding public office is reflected in the fact that about one-fifth of the honorary doctorates in all periods went to this group. A rising respect for the fine arts was evident in the honors conferred after 1900. During and shortly after wars, awards to successful military leaders rose, but almost disappeared in peace time. After 1900, honorary degrees were given in ever increasing numbers to businessmen. However, the growing importance of the labor movement has not been reflected in the distribution of honorary awards. In general, the more conservative elements have been favored.

A general picture of the honorary degree system for the years 1929-1938 can be sketched from the replies of over 200 college presidents to the writer's questionnaire. This information came from the heads of a variety of colleges and universities representing all sections of the United States. Information received from these sources shows that the hypothetical "median" college² gave 17 honorary degrees during this decade (the range was from none to 151; more than 25% gave none at all), of which seven were LL.D.'s, five D.D.'s, two Sc.D.'s, one Litt.D., one L.H.D., and one M.A. The 17 honorary degrees from the "median" college went to six clergymen, two college professors, one college president, one other educational administrator, and one each of the following: scientist, medical doctor, editor, lawyer, judge (a Republican), business man; and one recipient drawn from any of 50 or more occupations. Nine of those honored were residents of the local state, seven were from other states, and one from a foreign country (probably England). Fifteen of the group were Protestants and the remaining two Catholics. Whereas five were alumni of the institution awarding the degrees, one was a faculty member, and one a trustee.

²The inadequacies of this method of treatment are recognized. The "median" or "average" college does not exist. The purpose of assuming a "median" college is to provide a concise means to summarize the significant findings.

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The 17 "median" recipients were chosen by a committee of ten, including five faculty members, four trustees, and the president. Selection was made in May, preceding commencement, after a preliminary investigation of the candidates' formal education, membership in professional societies, books, articles, etc. There were no procedures for keeping this record—nor formal limitations restricting the committee.

The honorary degree practices have, of course, varied tremendously. Some institutions have conscientiously avoided giving out any honorary degrees. Some have been profuse in their bestowals.

Some have limited their awards to academic persons, while others have been preferential in treatment of the "practical man." In general, whatever the practice, it reflected the ideas of the controlling group of the institution and the pattern of the culture in which it operated. The South honored Democrats; the North, Republicans; the Methodist schools gave their awards to Methodists; and the Catholic colleges to Catholics. The occupations from which recipients were chosen were, for the most part, those from which the selecting committee was drawn: college administrators, professors, and the occupations represented by the board of trustees.

What did the typical or "average" college president think of the honorary degree system? He felt that too many honorary degrees were given, that each college should have a definite limit each year, that too many awards were given for practical and administrative success, that more honorary degrees should be given to persons in the fields of science, fine arts, educational administration, social service, and religion, and that fewer awards should be made to businessmen, politicians, and agricultural and labor leaders. However, although he professed to be somewhat more favorable to agricultural and labor leaders than to businessmen and politicians, the former rarely received awards, while bankers and judges were quite common figures on commencement platforms.

What did the average president think of certain abuses which are charged against the honorary degree system? He readily admitted that of persons of equal qualifications, the extreme conservatives were favored over the liberals. Rather hesitatingly he admitted that some businessmen and politicians brought pressure to gain honorary degrees for themselves, but he stated definitely that church leaders were the most persistent seekers for initials to add to their names. He felt that too often honors were given in recognition of the office held rather than for the actual merit of the individual and he acknowledged that hard feelings sometimes resulted among those rejected by the honors committee.

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The average president also felt that some abuses could be eliminated by refusing to bestow honorary degrees upon members of his own faculty or board of trustees, but he saw no harmful effects in honoring alumni. He stated that better choices would be made if the faculty had more control of the selection and the trustees less. The granting of honorary doctorates, in his opinion, should not be limited to institutions giving earned doctorates.

His views regarding what titles should be used for honorary degrees were confused. He agreed heartily with the general proposition that the titles of honorary awards should be such as to distinguish them from earned degrees; however, despite the fact that the general public is unable to distinguish an earned doctorate from an honorary one, he did not favor reserving the term "doctor" solely for in-course degrees. As to the specific titles of degrees, he preferred to have the commonly earned ones—A.B., A.M., M.D., and Ph.D.—kept strictly in-course, and he wanted the LL.D. and Litt.D. retained as honorary awards; but he could not decide whether he wanted the Mus.D., D.D., and Sc.D. as only in-course, only honorary, or both.

By and large, the typical college president believed that "American colleges and universities have grossly overworked the honorary degree privilege," and he hoped that in the future they would be more judicious in their selection. However, he clung to tradition and was not willing to make any drastic changes to rid the system of its abuses. He emphatically rejected the idea of discontinuing honorary degrees entirely.

Business leaders were asked what they thought of honorary degrees and about seven-eighths of them were favorably disposed toward the awards. Similarly, about two-thirds of the farm leaders favored them. But only about one-third of the labor leaders saw any good in honorary degrees. While many shades of opinion existed in each group, the typical businessman was apt to see honorary degrees as a worthy stimulant for distinguished service. All three groups criticized the alleged practice of giving honorary degrees for financial favors, but they saw nothing undemocratic in the awards if given on a merit basis. On the question of the influence of these honors on American society, the business man found it beneficial and good; the farm leader thought it "not very great"; while labor leaders declared the influence was negligible. As to the future of honorary degrees, the businessman wished to keep the practice much as it is now; the farm leader favored certain restrictions; and the labor leader wished to restrict or even abolish the practice.

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When a comparison was made of the opinions of the average college president with the opinion of an average newspaper reporter the college president appeared as a strong preserver of the status quo. To the journalist, honorary degrees with their ancient ceremonies, long gowns, and colored hoods seemed ludicrous:

The rite is generally considered among the fellows with whom I work to be a lot of pish-tish. Too often, it seems, colleges have sought publicity by identifying themselves with some more or less prominent person in the conferring of an honorary degree. And all too often the more or less prominent person is possessed of some ready cash which would make a tasty little endowment to said school.³

The average reporter paid little attention to the hundreds of professors and clergymen who received honorary degrees, but watched closely when the scores of business leaders and politicians stepped forward to receive sheepskins. When cartoonist Walt Disney was given an award, the press applauded but remained silent on the honorary degree system. When a governor, backed by an allegedly corrupt political machine, was honored, most newspapers lambasted both the recipient and the system. To the extent that the average journalist reflects the opinion of the general public, it appears that honorary degrees are somewhat lacking in prestige.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An understanding of the reasons why individuals desire honorary degrees, and the motives which prompt colleges to make such awards, should aid in formulating recommendations concerning the practice. The conferring of an honorary degree is a two-way relationship, given by an institution and received by an individual. The fact that in recent years more than 1000 persons annually have accepted honorary degrees is certainly an indication that they desire these awards, in spite of the frequently quoted remark of President Woolsey of Yale that "the desire to obtain the honor is a desire in which no man should indulge."⁴

Individuals desire honorary degrees for many reasons. It may be assumed that some of the motives prompting the desire are:

(1) To receive recognition for outstanding work.

(2) To facilitate advancement in one's profession (i.e., scholars, teachers, and ministers) and gain distinction in professional circles.

³The opinion of newspaper reporters, according to one of their number who preferred to remain anonymous.

⁴Woolsey, Theodore D., "Academical Degrees: Especially Honorary Degrees in the United States." *Century Magazine*, Vol. 6, pp. 365-376, July, 1884.

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- (3) To cover up deficiencies in academic background, especially the lack of an earned doctorate.
- (4) To receive recognition because a colleague has the award—the desire to “keep up with the Joneses.”
- (5) To secure recognition for the cause or point of view to which the recipient is devoted. (A manifestation of this motive is the interest of a person to secure an award because of the opportunity it might give to make a speech which, with the attendant publicity, would further his cause.)
- (6) To be able to use the title which the degree confers.
- (7) To gain recognition and praise from one’s Alma Mater.

Letters to the officials of Columbia College in the Columbiana Collection of the Columbia University library, written during the nineteenth century, reveal the intense desire of certain individuals to secure degrees. But the most blatant request found by the writer was written in the 1930’s. (The writer has a copy of this letter in his files but was asked to keep both contents and names confidential.)

The human factor should be kept in mind in considering the motives of institutions of higher learning in awarding honors. A college president may nominate a man for an LL.D. primarily because he is a close personal friend; a trustee may support the nominee because he feels the candidate is a superior scholar; another member of the honorary degree committee may give his support because the author of a recent book supports his economic or religious views. It may well be assumed that among the motives of colleges and universities for granting honorary degrees are the following:

- (1) To reward worthy achievements in the academic world.
- (2) To bring recognition to a friend of the institution or an influential person.
- (3) To reciprocate or to stimulate reciprocation by awarding honors to trustees, presidents, or friends of other colleges.
- (4) To help an alumnus advance professionally.
- (5) To fulfill commitments made by members of the committee on honorary degrees and to eliminate the personal annoyance caused by persistent individuals who carry on a vigorous campaign to secure awards.
- (6) To gain publicity.
- (7) To obtain the good will of an individual of the institution or group he represents.
- (8) To secure a popular speaker for commencement or induce a prominent person to visit the campus.

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(9) To stimulate an individual to aid, serve or contribute to the college.

(10) To gain students (i.e., by giving degrees to heads of preparatory schools).

(11) To express an opinion or strengthen a cause—political, economic, social, religious, etc.

(12) To lend support to certain social "in-groups,"—occupational, religious, political, and otherwise.

(13) To honor or show respect for an office by honoring the incumbent.

Those institutions that would select recipients only on the basis of scholarly achievements might well use the preceding items as a check list to test their reasons for nominating candidates for the honorary degree.

What practical suggestions does this study have to offer a college or university that would improve its honorary degree practices? The recommendations that follow are offered with an awareness of two factors: that American higher education is part of the larger social fabric and is subject to conflicting forces both from within and from without; and that the difficulties of making certain desirable changes for which a few individuals in the college may strive may be so great that only slight modification can be made immediately.

On the basis of his findings, the writer believes that the wisest and most practical solution of the honorary degree problem is to give no honorary degrees and, if necessary, develop new honorifics. To colleges which cannot or will not accept this recommendation, several less drastic suggestions are offered. If honorary degrees are to be given:

(1) Confine degrees to distinguished scholars.

(2) Place the recommendation of candidates in the hands of the faculty.

(3) Select candidates at least one year in advance.

(4) Limit number of candidates.

(5) Eliminate as candidates those connected with the institution.

(6) Have accrediting agencies pass on all awards.

(7) Make the titles of honorary degrees distinct from those of earned degrees.

(1) Confine Awards Entirely to Outstanding Scholars

If honorary degrees had been given only to Newtons, Darwins, and Einsteins, the prestige of the honorary degree system at the present time would be unquestioned. But that prestige has been lowered by the grant-

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ing of degrees for non-scholarly achievement—sometimes to men of shady reputations. (Yale awarded an honorary degree to Charles S. Mellen, of the New Haven Railroad, who was later linked to the allegedly fraudulent activities of this corporation; Northwestern, Union, and other universities awarded degrees to Samuel Insull, who fled to Greece to avoid criminal proceedings after the collapse of his utility empire.)

Institutions of higher learning might find that limiting honors to scholars would be a convenient means of eliminating those persistent seekers for degrees whose occupations are not academic. (Huey Long's desire for an LL.D. evidently had far-reaching effects on two universities. According to one of the country's leading newspapers, Huey poured state funds into Louisiana State University following the refusal of Tulane University to grant him an honorary degree⁵ and he placed Dr. James Monroe Smith⁶ in charge of L. S. U. in order to make Tulane look like a "hole in the ground.")

When colleges bestow honorary degrees upon representatives of an occupation outside the scholarly pursuits, pressure soon comes from those in other occupations to be similarly honored. This is to be expected, for if one more occupation is included, then logically a related one should also be included. If business leaders are admitted to the "fellowship of scholarly men" then, of course, farm leaders and labor leaders should be admitted. If entertainers are to be included, then there can be no criticism of the honorary Ph.D. conferred on Bing Crosby by Gonzaga University or of the honorary M.A.'s given to Walt Disney by Yale and Harvard. And if sports figures are to be considered eligible, then why should anyone object to the award of Doctor of Physical Education given to Connie Mack (Cornelius McGillicuddy) by Pennsylvania Military Academy? If endurance of hardships is an achievement to be recognized by an honorary degree, then no one is better qualified than Admiral Byrd to be made a Doctor of Fortitude and Faith by Beaver College—or any other college, for that matter. How absurd the situation can become was indicated by the report that Bonzo, a "Seeing Eye" Shepherd dog, had been honored as a "Doctor of Canine Fidelity" by the University of Newark. Bonzo, it seems, was the guide for a blind student who graduated in 1939.⁷

⁵*New York Herald-Tribune*, June 27, 1939.

⁶Smith was convicted of fraud while in office and sentenced to thirty months in prison. *New York Herald-Tribune*, Nov. 11, 1939.

⁷A letter from the University stated that the award to Bonzo was a "stunt" of the Alumni Association. However, the public gave credence to the report since the newspapers did not carry the University's explanation.

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The writer recommends that colleges confine degree-granting to fields of academic achievement, leaving the task of conferring honorifics in non-academic fields to organizations functioning within those fields. David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford University aptly remarked: "I see no more reason why colleges should confer the degree of LL.D. on successful generals than that successful investigators should be dubbed 'colonel' or 'major' by the War Department."⁸

(2) Place the Recommendation of Candidates in the Hands of the Faculty

It is suggested that faculty members in a given field initiate all suggestions for awards to men in that field. The unanimous vote of this subgroup might well be required before giving a candidate further consideration. As a further means of eliminating doubtful candidates, it is suggested that a candidate of a faculty group be voted on by secret ballot by the entire faculty and the unanimous approval of this larger group be required. Thus, the over-enthusiasm of the smaller faculty group for one in their own field would be checked by those in related fields. Requiring unanimous vote by both the specialized group and the entire faculty would tend to reduce the number of recipients, and undoubtedly result in selections of higher merit. After a candidate has been approved by the faculty, it might be well to present his name to the board of trustees. However, although the trustees should be permitted to reject candidates of the faculty, they should not be empowered to add any new candidates.

It is pertinent to point out that Senator Justin Smith Morrill set an excellent example when he declined to be a member of the board of trustees of Norwich University because, according to his biographer, "he was not satisfied" that that institution "was exercising due discretion in granting honorary degrees and preserving her scholarly reputation."⁹

(3) Make Initial Selection One Year or More in Advance

If candidates were required to have the unanimous vote of the faculty and trustees, then placed on a waiting list for at least a year, and at the end of the period again voted upon, some serious mistakes would be avoided.

(4) Definitely Limit the Number of Honorary Degrees Awarded

A further safeguard against possible abuses would be to limit definitely the number of awards to a very low figure. Not more than one per year

⁸*Educational Review*, Vol. 20, p. 534, December, 1900.

⁹Parker, William Belmont, *The Life and Public Services of Justin Smith Morrill*, p. 261.

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for the larger institutions is recommended and not over one for every five or ten years for smaller institutions. Such a limitation would add considerable distinction to the honorary degree. This would, of course, mean the elimination of the mass awarding of honorary degrees at celebrations and anniversaries, the occasions when many of the less deserving individuals are included along with a few more outstanding persons.

The number of honorary degrees given a person might also be limited to one. If such a degree is in recognition of merit, there is little point in having the merit rediscovered several times by several colleges. If the honorary degree committee of a particular institution has evaluated a person and made him a Doctor of Laws, why should it be necessary for the process to be repeated? After all, what can an individual do with several honorary degrees that he cannot do with one? An anecdote concerning Baron Steuben, of Revolutionary War fame, is that, after hearing General Lafayette had been made a Doctor of Laws, he became very apprehensive that he might be made one also, and on approaching Cambridge with his troops, he halted and gave this command: "You shall spur de horse vell, and ride troo de town like the devil, for if they catch you, they make a doctor of you."¹⁰

(5) Eliminate Candidates Connected with the Awarding Institution

Within an institution petty personal considerations interfere with an unbiased selection of candidates on merit. Already many institutions have regulations forbidding the granting of awards to their faculty members, president, or trustees in active service, but others still honor these groups. Petty jealousy caused by internal awards sometimes leads to such strife and turmoil as to seriously harm the college. At an early commencement of Shurtleff College in Illinois, D.D.'s had been conferred on the Reverend Gideon B. Perry, M.D., President of the Medical Department of the College, and three of his friends, but the Board of Trustees, at their next meeting, refused to sanction the awards. Undaunted, the resourceful Dr. Perry induced his friend, the Secretary of the Board, to enter the awarding of the degrees in the minutes of the meeting. This split the Board and created a conflict which lasted more than five years.

It engaged well-nigh the entire attention of the trustees at session after session. A vast amount of energy and time were consumed. Important plans for the development of the school were side-tracked in order that this issue might be settled. An

¹⁰Thomas, Flavel S., "The LL.D. Degree," *Harvard Graduates Magazine*, No. 11, p. 518, June, 1903.

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intense bitterness of feeling was engendered. Whether Gideon B. Perry was a Doctor of Divinity or not at the end of all the strife is an open question. But there is no question that his overwhelming desire for personal emolument became a source of serious injury to the institution which he so ardently desired should confer her honors upon him.¹¹

(6) *Provide Supervision Through Accrediting Agencies*

Regional and national accrediting agencies, such as the Association of American Universities and the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, at present set minimum standards which all their member schools are expected to meet. These agencies have been powerful forces in raising academic standards and could probably do much to improve the honorary degree situation. Similarly these agencies could set up minimum standards for honorary degrees. If adding this power required the approval of a majority of the member colleges and universities the support of the large number that now give few or no honorary degrees would probably insure its successful adoption. The practice would be considerably improved if these accrediting agencies required that each college intending to confer honorary degrees submit to them, sufficiently in advance, a list of the proposed candidates, together with full information on each one, including their scholarly and academic achievements and the reasons why the award is made. Colleges would hesitate to submit nominees of dubious merit.

(7) *Use Titles Clearly Different From Those of Earned Degrees*

The majority of college presidents indicated their approval of the general proposition that the titles of honorary awards should clearly distinguish them from in-course degrees. A method of differentiation would be to replace all the present varieties of honorary doctorates with the title "Honorary Doctor" (D. Hon.), which would leave no doubt as to their classification. This method is used at present in some foreign countries. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, received the degree "Doctor Honoriaro" from the University of the Republic of Uruguay at Montevideo. There is some disadvantage in making "Doctor Honorary" the only honorary doctorate. In oral conversation, "Doctor Smith, D. Hon.," would be referred to as "Dr. Smith," which would fail to clarify things.

If this suggestion seems too drastic for immediate introduction, the following might be considered. Award only one type of honorary degree,

¹¹de Blois, Austen Kennedy, *The Pioneer School, A History of Shurtleff College*, p. 96.

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namely, the Doctor of Laws (LL.D.), which is now given to more individuals than any other honorary degree. Some believe that awards for achievements outside academic fields should be continued but would distinguish between the two types of achievement. For these it is suggested that LL.D. be used as a non-academic distinction, and the Litt.D. for academic achievement. The use of the Sc.D. as an honorary award is not recommended as it is given regularly as an earned degree. The LL.D. and Litt.D., however are now used almost exclusively as honorary degrees.

DISCONTINUE HONORARY DECREES

It is not suggested that all formal honorifics be eliminated. There can be no doubt that honorifics are worthwhile if they are used to stimulate socially desirable activities. If, however, an award can be obtained by means other than success in the lines of endeavor which the honorific is supposed to stimulate, it tends to become meaningless.

Perhaps the fundamental criticism of honorary degrees is that they tend to be undemocratic. Discrimination in terms of sex, politics, and religion often influence selections. Recipients are chosen by committees seldom qualified to pass on the merits of the candidates. Applicants are not required to conform to standards laid down in advance, as is the case with earned degrees and most prizes and awards. As far back as 1869 Charles Dana expressed concern over this situation:

No course of study is prescribed by any of our colleges by which they may be secured; no amount of learning and acquirements suffices to obtain them unless the good will or favor of a college faculty be first obtained. This fact alone shows how entirely arbitrary must be the standard by which the recipients of these honorary degrees are determined upon.¹²

In the pre-Civil War days Timon Fardelism raised the issue with this statement: "If the Constitution prohibits Government from conferring titles of nobility, our colleges seem of late to have taken the responsibility in conferring them." Criticizing the excessive number of honorary degrees given in 1851, he observed: "So many of the ministerial order have lately received the honorary degree of Doctor (about fifty), [sic] that it would seem to be insinuating something rather indelicate to the feelings of the unfortunate few, if they were not also varnished."¹³

¹²*The Sun*, New York, June 21, 1869.

¹³Fardelism, Timon, "Essay on the Degrees and Titles Conferred on Men by Our Colleges," *Holden's Dollar Magazine*, Vol. VIII, p. 200, November, 1851.

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Much more recently, in the late 1930's, a number of college presidents and newspaper men referred to honorary degrees as substitutes for "titles of nobility," the granting of which by Federal and state governments is forbidden by law in the United States.

To discontinue giving honorary degrees entirely seems to the writer the most sound policy an institution could adopt. Over one-fourth of the liberal arts colleges and universities in the United States now pursue such a policy. The several hundred teachers' colleges and junior colleges, except in a few rare cases, do not make such awards. Every type, variety, and size of institution that does bestow honorary degrees can be matched with a similar one that does not. For example: the University of Virginia does not, the University of Georgia does; Brigham Young University does not, Southern Methodist University does; Vassar does not, Smith does; the University of Washington does not, the University of Oregon does; Texas Wesleyan does not, Nebraska Wesleyan does; Vanderbilt does not, Duke does; Stanford does not, Dartmouth does.¹⁴ This indicates that the honorary practice is not vital to the existence of higher education in America. A gradual reduction in annual awards over a period of years could, of course, achieve a desirable end with a minimum of conflict. The advantages involved are obvious.

A correlative recommendation to scholars anxious to protect the prestige of earned degrees is to refuse any honorary degrees which may be offered to them. The prolific bestowals of academic awards to persons of dubious merit in non-academic fields has brought not only honorary degrees into disrepute but all other degrees and, in the eyes of the public, the whole system of higher education. There is distinguished precedent for refusing honorary degrees. Charles Francis Adams and President Millard Fillmore refused Oxford's D.C.L.¹⁵ Grover Cleveland rejected Harvard's LL.D. William Anderson, a famous Scottish preacher of the early nineteenth century, declined the title of Doctor of Divinity, offered to him by the University of Edinburgh, because he felt that its selecting body was not in a position to judge his divinity.¹⁶ Herbert Spencer is said to have "repeatedly refused this form of honor."¹⁷ When the trustees of Amherst in-

¹⁴Based on reports for 1929-1938.

¹⁵Appleton's *Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Wilson, James C. and John Fiske, editors, Vol. 2, p. 456.

¹⁶Wilson, Calvin Dill, "The Present Status of Honorary Degrees," *The Chautauquan*, Vol. 31, No. 5, p. 475. August, 1900.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 475.

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formed Henry Ward Beecher that they wished to decorate him with the title of Doctor of Divinity, he politely declined by saying that he preferred to continue to bear only the name that had been given him when he was baptized in his mother's arms.¹⁸

In conclusion, the writer wishes to make clear that he has no illusions as to the effect his principal recommendation will probably have on contemporary practice. He expects that honorary degrees will continue to be bestowed, although possibly by a decreasing number of institutions, on hundreds of willing recipients into the indefinite future. This custom is likely to remain until a severe social shock causes a complete reorganization or abandonment of the present system of higher education. In any case, future historians may well describe the honorary degree practices of our age in words similar to those used by James E. Clark:

It was the fashion of those times, [1939] as well as of other times, for colleges and universities to confer honorary degrees upon men of prominence. The recipient of such distinction was thereby raised a round or two on the social ladder; his vanity was gratified and his name once more had been forced upon the attention of the public. The attendant publicity was commercially valuable to him. The university also enjoyed a little reflected glory from his success in business, as well as a handsome immediate gratuity, and the pleasant possibility that this newly adopted son might remember the institution when he came to make his will. Indeed, he often did remember it to such substantial effect that the two or three letters of the alphabet he was authorized to tack onto his name may be said to have been among the most valuable small products of the time.²⁰

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 475.

²⁰Clark, James E., *The Last Days of American Liberty*, pp. 6-7.

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